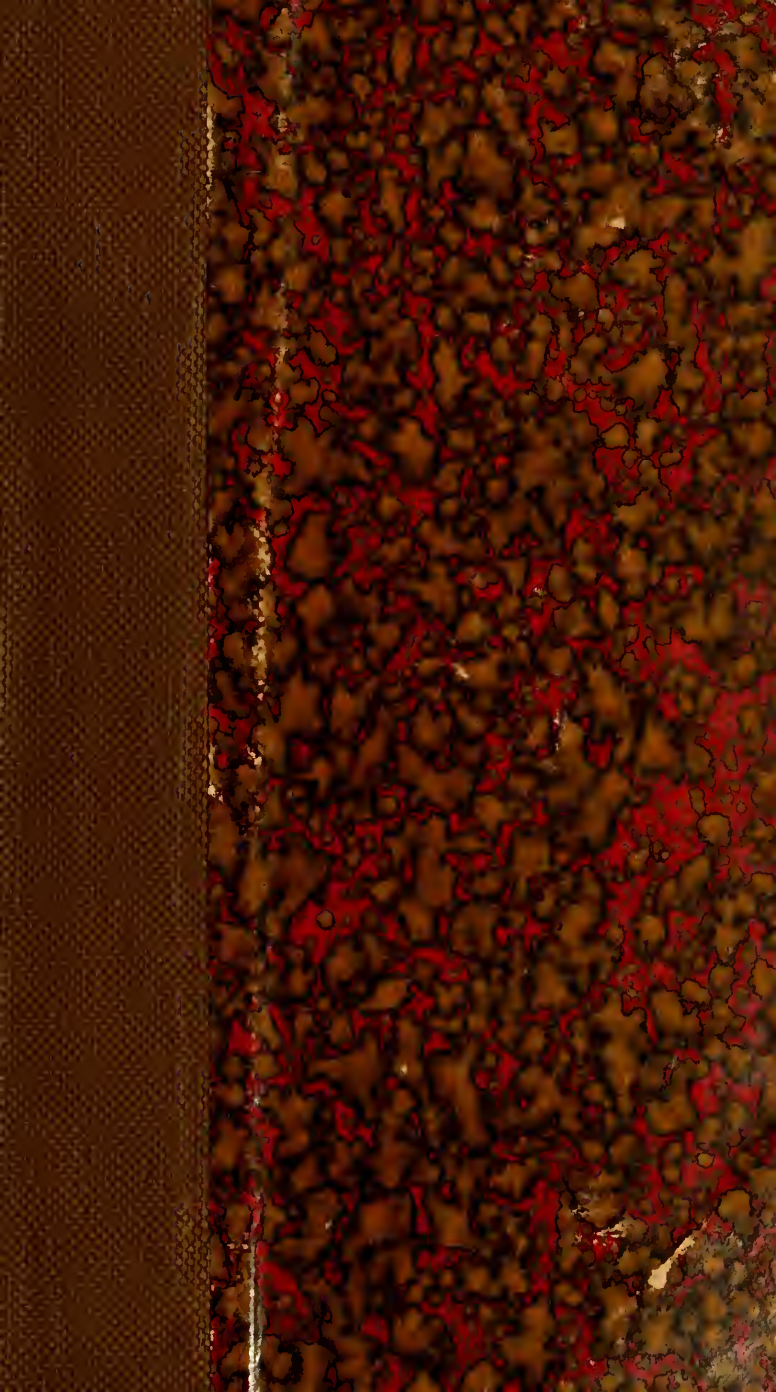

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MISSISSIPPI SCENES;

OR, SKETCHES OF

SOUTHERN AND WESTERN LIFE

AND ADVENTURE,

HUMOROUS, SATIRICAL, AND DESCRIPTIVE,

INCLUDING THE

LEGEND OF BLACK CREEK.

BY JOSEPH B. COBB.

AUTHOR OF "THE CREOLE" ETC, ETC.

"I was always fond of visiting new scenes, and observing strange characters and manners. My holiday afternoons (even when a mere boy) were spent in rambles about the surrounding country. I knew every spot where a murder had been committed, or a ghost seen. This rambling propensity strengthened with my years."—WASHINGTON IRVING.

"My enthusiasm was always chiefly awakened by the wonderful and the terrible—the common taste of children, but in which I have remained a child ever unto this day."—AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE

HON. AUGUSTUS B. LONGSTREET,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI.

My dear Sir:—

It is not unfrequently the case that sinister motives are attributed to authors who choose to inscribe their works to persons whose fame has passed the ordeal, and whose names are distinguished in the literary world. I may not escape a like suspicion in thus selecting your name (distinguished alike in the professional and religious as well as the literary world) as the means of introducing the following sketches to the public, but I am very sure that such will not be entertained by those who know of the many ties of friendship which have induced me to make such selection. This friendship I have ever claimed as a portion of my inheritance, both in my own and in right of *her* who presides over my household. It is a claim which, having been handed from father and father-in-law to son, will be recognized by all Georgians, and one which the accomplished au-

thor of the "Georgia Scenes," will be, I sincerely trust, the last to repudiate. While, therefore, notwithstanding the very great disparity of age, many of the most pleasant and grateful scenes of my own life have been associated with your name, I have only to look back a few years into the past to found a title to your friendship which will absolve me of any sinister intention or design in this dedication. Wishing you, then, my dear judge, many happy New Years' return, and that a life which has been so eminently useful may yet be long preserved, I take the liberty of subscribing myself, what I have been from boyhood,

Your sincere friend,

THE AUTHOR.

Longwood, *Miss.*, 1850.

INTRODUCTION.

A VERY few words will suffice to preface the following sketches, which are mostly drawn from real scenes and characters, and may, therefore, be regarded by the reader as faithfully original. The models and incidents are alone borrowed and embellished. Hundreds now living will doubtless recognize and identify every character, and thousands are familiar with the scenery and many of the incidents. These facts serve to alleviate, partially, the distrust with which I offer them to the public; though, if I shall have failed to paint sufficiently life-like, my mortification will be, in consequence, much the more intense.

The Mississippi reader, however, will look in vain for the originals of *all* the characters and scenes in our own State or midst; and many friends in Georgia, where the author's early life and youth were passed, will, no doubt, be surprised to find much in the following pages which belongs more properly to pleasant *reminiscences* of the treasured past. Many busy actors are the cherished friends of early days (some now, alas! asleep in the

cold and cheerless tomb), redrawn, and introduced on a different theatre, truly, but not altogether among unfamiliar names. Nevertheless, it is *here* and round about that inquisitive or curious readers must look mainly for satisfaction.

Some of these sketches were originally published in Mississippi papers, under the signature of a "Rambler." The author has, therefore, been compelled to divide the volume into two parts, the original design having been departed from, and the second series being of a different character, entirely, from the first. The last sketch, also, cannot be called a "Mississippi Scene," and the author can only excuse its introduction on the ground of its being a family reminiscence of the Revolutionary era, and mainly true in fact. It was furnished, originally, as a contribution, by the author, for the October number, 1848, of Peterson's National Magazine.

The reader will find that I have indulged, truly, the "*otium cum dignitate*" in the composition of the following sketches. The style is that of everyday thought. I have written more with a view to amuse and entertain than to engage or instruct. And if various authors are thought of and named as my model, let me say, once for all, that I have written with no design either at imitation or competition. Imitation, at the best, is hazardous; competition is out of the question when mentioned in connection with any whose writings I may have chosen for my *model*. Any rough sketcher may make

a tolerable copy. To conceive and carry out the original requires the hand, always, of a master in the art. Whilst, therefore, the method and arrangement of the following sketches may have been suggested by reading the works of abler writers, I can yet say, with truth, that there is a novelty about them which may, perhaps, compensate for the absence of greater beauties.

Many of the scenes purporting to be laid in Mississippi will be found equally applicable elsewhere in the South—particularly those illustrative of negro character and incident. I have written, it will be seen, as a journalist or sketcher, not as an essayist or a politician. Abler pens than mine have long since fulfilled this last character.

In conclusion, I can assure my readers that they may rely on the truth and accuracy of the descriptions found in the following pages; and while, doubtless, much is embellished, there are many who will be able to pronounce most they meet with "o'er true."

J. B. C.

Longwood, *Miss.*, 1850.

MISSISSIPPI SCENES.

CHAPTER I.

A SABBATH MORNING IN COLUMBUS.

The distance which separates us, my dear S——, will be sufficient apology for addressing you as the medium of communicating a few rambling and descriptive thoughts to the public, if indeed I were not justified already in the fact that I have been long honored with an intimate friendship to which few have aspired with as much sincerity, and fewer still with such pleasing and cordial evidences of success. And if this was destined to reach you first through a private letter, intended to circulate only amongst the cherished few who form the delightful circle into which you will soon be welcomed, it would then accord better with my feelings to remove the veil of disguise, and affix to the initial letter the balance which makes a name connected with every virtue, and which is associated with scenes of domestic beauty peculiarly grateful and pleasant. But that modesty of thought which operates to confine within select limits an intellectual taste, as worthy of admiration as of envy,

and which might eminently elicit both if more publicly diffused, forbids me to hazard a liberty so questionable in its results to a friendship I would by no means rashly lose. In pursuing these sketches, therefore (designed merely for *home* consumption), I shall leave the disguise in both instances to be penetrated by those whose interest in the scenes may lead them to the task, or who have been sufficiently acquainted in our social circle to experience at once shrewd suspicions of our identity. I shall begin then with a *home* sketch; nor do I know whether, in their future progress, these letters will ever be extended beyond the precincts or suburbs of the lovely and picturesque though comparatively unknown and certainly unappreciated little city in which our acquaintance began. Such, though, may be the case.

It was a lovely Sabbath morning in the spring of 184– that I found myself leisurely strolling along a secluded street of our little city, refreshing my eye with the sight of numerous beautiful flower-gardens, redolent with the earliest and sweetest visitants of the season, and indulging that thoughtful solitude of mind so agreeable to all who reflect much, or who aim to divert the thoughts of others by communicating the fruits of that solitude and reflection. The morn was most unusually calm and quiet, and the little spring birds were warbling merrily their joyous notes of welcome, and the sun shone with that hazy and subdued lustre which we so often imagine in connection with the Sabbath. Presently the church bells were heard calling the little Sunday scholars to their weekly Bible tasks, and, involuntarily, my own fancy wandered back to childhood's years when the

same sound called me to the same loved task. I could almost see the happy groups of bright and smiling faces as they assembled in the vestibule of the old vine-clad church, awaiting the arrival of the aged minister whose delight it was to instruct us. There was the rosy-cheeked little girl, clad in spotless white, with a nosegay of sweet flowers in one hand, whilst the other held her Bible and catechism. By her side was the little brother, the pet of home, the darling of father and mother, whose years were yet too tender for other mental employment. There stood the damsel just opening into womanhood, and the youth pluming himself on the cut and appearance of his first surtout with its shining brass buttons. There in one corner was the mild-looking teacher, rehearsing with his class the lesson soon to be recited in the minister's presence; and there, too, in another corner, was seen a bevy of laughing faces, greeting each other with the fondness and simplicity belonging to childhood. Then the venerated minister enters—all are still, and answer reverently to his paternal welcome. The door is opened, the invocation pronounced, and I almost surprised myself listening to catch the soft music of the little choir as they joined voices in praising the God of Sabaoth. The picture was too vivid to be diverted from my mind's eye by the passing scenes and circumstances around. I was carried back to boyhood and to my early happy home—home as it was before death came and trials began. The tenants of the lonely and distant graves were before me as I had seen them in the morning of life and in the opening of memory. I saw the mother who prayed over me, the father who petted me,

the little brothers in whose gambols I participated in those sunny days when all was so bright. Even the old servants who watched us were present to my imagination. I could see the companions who shared these guileless pleasures, and who then bid too fair for life to sink so soon into the grasp of death. All was as fresh before me as if there the scene had been enacting, and moments passed listlessly away, and the last vibrating echoes of the church-bells were dying away, when my fancy was forced again from those lovely and grateful contemplations. And now my thoughts too changed! Where, I asked myself, were those bright groups which used to assemble in that old church? Some, cut off in the bloom of life, reposed beneath the same shades adjoining, where I had so often watched them mingling in childish sports. There, too, lay the little bright-eyed brother, whom first of all the earth I had *learned* to love; and there too was the marble monument which towered over the mortal remains of him who in life had petted us as the apples of his eye. Years and years ago I had watched, with tearful eye, the green grass as it waved over the lonely grave of that fond mother who had brightened the home of childhood. All were now gone, and with the lapse of time other feelings had been engendered, other and equally cherished affections had taken the place of those that were fled. There is, however, my dear S——, nothing which comes so welcome and grateful to the feelings as those dim remembrances of early days, which so harmonize our thoughts, and steal our imaginations insensibly away to scenes which were unalloyed with worldly anxieties, and mellowed by those

softer primitive affections which have not known the blight of more advanced years.

It was then under the influence of feelings like these that I wandered on into the more frequented portions of the city, with the intention of attending one of the services of the day. I determined to go where I should meet with the most numerous congregation, with a view of finding, if possible, whether many others might not be pervious to a like touch of feeling, and whether the callousness of every-day life might not be, by some chance stroke, forcibly disarmed and diverted.

I continued my walk, and came to the intersection of Church Street. Here I paused, for a moment, to survey the numerous throng of shining carriages and fretful horses before and around me. Flashy-looking negroes, in linen and broadcloth, their heads covered with glistening hats and their hands smothered in kid gloves of every hue, mounted on their lofty boxes, seemed to be striving who should succeed in cutting the most capers at the risk of their own necks and their master's purses. On my right, at the distance only of a few paces, I could see the Presbyterian church, surmounted with its glittering dome, which seemed to *shake* on its slender and rather elegant pillars beneath the vigorous efforts of some ardent bell-ringer who tolled the faithful to their worship.

Immediately in my front towered the stately and elegant edifice dedicated to Baptist worship, and further on, within stone throw, was seen the neat but more moderate proportions of the Methodist church. These two, you must be aware, my lovely friend, are the grand *rival* sects of the city, as indeed they are of the United States. They are ever ready for the ring, and a regular

theological prize fight (not in its vulgar sense) comes off now and then between them. What is strange, too, they rarely ever contend about the essential principles of religion, but are extremely concerned to know whether the ancient prisons were provided with tan-vats, and whether the early Christians used water in Homœopathic or Allopathic quantities. What a pity that, in order to settle this first theological proposition, the Jews or Christian fathers have not been able to excavate some manuscript remnant of old Simon the tanner!

And so earnest are they on these important points that, like the Highland and Lowland Scotch, they never allude to the matters in dispute without an involuntary itching to "pitch into" each other, and take a regular Hyer and Sullivan turn. These rounds are sometimes pursued to a most barbarous extent. They are renewed daily for weeks at a time, and Tartleton's quarters are the order of the day. The regular ministrations of the pulpit sink into oblivion under this more absorbing and essential business, and the benches of the arena groan beneath the weight of loafers and sinners, who convoke from much the same species of laudable curiosity that gathers the hordes to witness a match race betwixt Boston and Fashion. No sort of contest is so *eagerly* sought after or so dearly *prized* by this respectable class of community, and old racers, and veteran sportsmen who never see the *inside* of a church during the *old-fashioned* sort of service, feel indispensably bound in *duty* and *conscience* to attend on occasions of the kind under consideration. Lest, too, the cause of our holy religion should suffer from neglect to *cultivate this taste* in the transgressing community, these churches (and others, too,

though they are more secondary) set apart select *champions* trained and inured to the service of theological pugilism, and it has become now as much a *science* as boxing and cudgel-playing are amongst the English. And I very reverently question, my dear S——, whether St. Paul attracted larger crowds when, "after the *manner of men, he fought with beasts* at Ephesus," than do these pulpit champions when, betwixt the hours of exhibition, they play the *lion* on the village streets or city promenades. All honor and praise, then, to these doctrinal boxers, who distrust too much the results of Christian harmony and amalgamation to allow this *pious warfare* to become extinct! It is woefully to be dreaded that such cessation of strife might produce a most *lamentable* state of torpidity, from which *religion* could never resuscitate.

But it is high time I was going on with the legitimate thread of my sketch of a Sabbath morning's visit to the Church of the Methodists. I was soon brought to conclude, on the morning in question, that it was among these worshipers I would find the largest congregation.

I have often listened in company with you, my lovely friend, to the eloquent and able discourses of the minister then in charge of this church, and have often, too, wished you had been with me, when these observations were made. You, my dear S——, belong to a different church, and I, as you well know, am no churchman at all, but we have both agreed that this gentleman was a learned and interesting expositor of the holy Gospel, and peculiarly happy in awakening some latent feeling, in the course of his sermon, which caused the hearts of his hearers to beat in unison with his own, and impressed

the mind with a train of associations, springing from some tender and cherished fountain of memory, which often surprised the most wary into a gush of tears. And, indeed, whatever may be said about the desultory and *discretionary* polity of this class of Christ's followers—it must yet be fairly admitted that their services, when conducted by able preachers, are most delightful and interesting, because the best adapted to arouse the finer emotions of our nature, and call into vivid action deeper sentiments than those merely of awe and solemnity.

The seats were nearly all taken when I entered, but I found a vacant one without much difficulty, and composed myself for the services, though scarcely recovered from the sensations by which, only a few hours before, I had been so completely overpowered. I marked the majority of persons present, and soon ascertained that I knew most of them. I was at once satisfied that this was eminently an opportunity to observe the power of eloquent appeal and happy allusion in forcing into one common channel of thought and sympathy these differing materials and conflicting natures. Every variety of character, and temperament, and condition was around; and I prepared myself to observe with wakeful eye the effect of the coming discourse, and to detect, if possible, that furtive link of sympathy which philosophy teaches us to believe exists between all rational beings, though a lifetime may pass without its development in natures which have been corroded by more powerful and less tender influences. My only fear was now that the preacher himself might fail to strike the happy mesmeric chord.

The hymn was given out and sung with a zeal and

good feeling which augured finely for a speedy diffusion of that mystic influence so essential to the successful accomplishment of my wishes. The feelings of the worshipers rose with the swell of vocal melody, in which all joined to waft their morning orisons to the throne of Grace. I was myself most sensibly affected by the simple music. The air was as old as the hills, and carried my fancy many years back, when in happier days I had listened to the same familiar strains in the nursery, in the village church, or, perhaps, at some rustic camp-meeting. A thousand fond and long-forgotten associations were crowded instantly on my mind, and I surrendered unconsciously to a delightful revery. And, indeed, my dear S——, I have often wondered of late years that this class of Christians should endeavor to introduce choirs and new-fangled music in their churches! They destroy, by this means, one of the principal charms of their worship. The moment that native melody is restrained, and the untaught *peasant* debarred from mingling his voice in unison with those around him, genuine Methodism will begin to retrograde.

The prayer followed—chaste, unostentatious, uttered with becoming decorum and mildness, though fervent and inspiring; but, if the responses had not been so general, I should have pronounced it somewhat too protracted. All was now attention for the *exordium* of the sermon, and the text was most aptly selected. It was the beautiful and touching parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The first half hour of the discourse was consumed in a learned and ingenious exposition of the doctrinal points involved, which, though intensely interesting and instructive, failed utterly to produce that effect for

which I had been prepared from the annunciation of the subject, and which was indispensable to the accomplishment of my wishes. But the peroration exceeded my expectation, and, despite every effort to the contrary, my own philosophy of mind was disarmed, and I was borne forcibly along in the current of feeling which was fast overwhelming the audience. The splendid fortune and sumptuous living of the nabob were most touchingly contrasted with the privations and sorrows of the suffering beggar who lay at his gate. You could almost see the sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks of the one as he reveled gayly with friends over his wines and viands; and then your ears were seemingly appalled by the groans of the other as the pitying dogs licked his sores. There, before you, were the sunken eyes, and wan countenance, and sickly smile, as he welcomed the friendly animals; and a happy illustration presented vividly to mind his choking thoughts, which found no utterance, as his fancy wandered to the distant home he was never again to behold, with its happy faces, and cheerful comforts, and simple abundance. Scarcely a dry eye was to be seen; and when, at the closing scene of life, the celestial messengers were pictured descending to bear to Abraham's bosom the despised and neglected sufferer, the passage of the breeze, or the rustling of a silk dress as some weeping female changed her position, might have been insensibly mistaken for the flutter of angel wings, wafting the loathed burden to a happy home in heaven. Sobs and groans became universal, and the calmness of the preacher himself gave way before the vivid imagery of his own active powers. Such is the force of true pulpit eloquence when intended

to reach the heart through the medium of the sympathies. There sat those whose bread of life was drawn from the distresses and misfortunes of friends and neighbors, weeping as if their hearts would burst. There sat the grasping and avaricious absorbed in grief; and the ambitious, and the proud, and the revengeful, all alike carried away by a gush of tender emotions. There were the prodigal, and the indifferent, and the unbelieving, surprised into a state of overpowering sensibility. There were the truly pious, the amiable, and the beautiful, all bathed in tears! Great God! what a mysterious organ is this human heart! The seat alike of all that is vicious and all that is good, philosophy has been unable to bare its recesses or explain its contradictions; religion itself has failed wholly to subdue its impulses.

I have ever, my dear S——, since that Sabbath morning, loved to attend Methodist worship; and though seldom in the habit of such visits, the associations produced by the one in question have ever dwelt green in my memory.

CHAPTER II.

THE DUN GENTLEMEN OF TOWN.

Memory, or association, my dear S——, is the true source of pure intellectual pleasure, and the gift of this faculty is strong proof of the celestial nature of man. Few hours of our life are filled up with objects adequate to the mind. We are so often in want of present pleasure or enjoyment that we are forced to have recourse every moment to the past or the future, and thus, as Johnson so aptly says, seek to relieve the vacuities of our being. The satisfactions arising from memory are the only joys, indeed, which we can call our own. The present, as the same writer tells us, is in perpetual motion, leaves us as soon as it arrives, ceases to be present before its presence is well perceived, and is only known to have existed by the effects which it leaves behind, or the hopes which it excites for the future. But whatever of solace or of pleasure we find *in the sacred treasures of the past*, is out of reach of violence, or accident, nor are to be lost either by our own weakness or another's malice.

> Be fair or foul, or rain or shine,
> The joys I *have* possessed in spite of fate are mine;
> Not heaven itself upon the *past* has power,
> But what has been *has been*, and I have had my hour.
>
> Dryden.

The preceding number was partly intended, my dear S——, to illustrate what has here been said, inasmuch as it exampled the power and pleasure of association suggested by passing scenes, clothing the present with an ephemeral fascination, drawn, by association, from the pure fountain of departed joys. Others, however, less charitable than yourself, and more inclined to fastidious criticism, may choose to attribute very different intentions as the groundwork of the former number, and seek to connect with untasteful satire what was designed merely as mirthful, harmless sketches. Well, be it so. If we make the praise or blame of others the sole rule of our conduct, we shall soon be distracted by a boundless variety of irreconcilable judgments, and held in perpetual suspense between contrary impulses. Being first satisfied that he has not deviated from the established rules of composition, every writer, if not every man, should regulate his actions by his own conscience, and shun the error of attempting to secure popularity by a solicitous conformity to prevailing prejudices, and an undue submission to advice and criticism. It is easy to foretell the fate of productions squared and fashioned by this Procrustean pattern. They soon sink into unpalatable commonplaces, and oftentimes inspire a merited disgust.—It is conceded on all sides that society, in its different features and divisions, is a legitimate subject for the exercise of pen, ink, and paper; and, proceeding on this admission, writers should resolutely adopt the Crocket motto, taking care to observe jealously all the decent and becoming proprieties which regulate social intercourse. I have as little respect as any one, dear S——, for that class of mortals who aim to criticise with-

out first learning to indite, and who seek to gain by a system of depreciation that notoriety which true ambition contemns. Let us, then, without assuming to rebuke errors at which all connive, or to reform customs in which society habitually indulges, not so much to its detriment as to its confusion, endeavor in pursuing the leisure sketches to proceed *à la mode*—and that, too, in its common, not in the literal or *vernacular* sense.

I have often heard you lament, my dear S——, that Columbus was so barren of legendary or romantic association. Indeed, as to this, one only spot of all its various, imposing and tasteful local beauties is connected with superstitious incident—and that has yet failed to elicit attention from the pen of a tourist or tale-teller. It *may* do so in the course of the present year; and, as I shall doubtless have some acquaintance with the author, you, my fair friend, may be assured that a copy shall reach you, even in the distant and lovely retreat which you have chosen. But there is much to admire in the boldness and novelty of much of its scenery. There is the tall and abrupt bluff which overlooks the blue stream of the Bigbee, lined with green shrubs, and fragrant wild flowers, and blooming vines, and towering trees all beautifully reflected on the crystal bosom of the river beneath, and luxuriating in the grandeur of primitive and undisturbed regularity! On its summits you may see the smoke curling gracefully up from many a cottage chimney; and beyond, the eye is greeted with a beautiful plain widening gradually out, and covered with handsome residences, which wealth and taste have united to adorn, smiling in all the cherished luxury of domestic comfort and happiness. From yonder eminence on the Tusca-

loosa road, the traveler beholds with delight, not unmixed with some wonder, the miniature panorama of a Mahometan city, rising suddenly to the vision in the interior of a country not famed for its improvements, with domes, and spires, and cupolas, looming in the distance, to gigantic proportions, and dazzling the eye with their glittering summits! No town of its size in the Union can boast of a like imposing and showy array in this respect; and if we are driven to admit that *taste* is not so generally diffused as some might desire, we may at least challenge emulation in the way of architectural improvement. Passing the main thoroughfares of the little city, we find the plain on which it is situated broken suddenly into formidable ravines, and wild dells, and gentle undulating hills which are occasionally crowned with lovely rural retreats, where the comforts of the country and the conveniences of town may be alike enjoyed. Surely, then, my dear S——, our dull, dry, stale Columbus (as it is often called) is not wholly without its claims to interest; and if we will only bring the imagination from its *wandering* flights to our own homely firesides, we shall discover that scenes with which we are, perhaps, disagreeably familiar, may borrow at least a passing effulgence.

From the number of church edifices which are interspersed through the city, one might be led unwarily to the conclusion, my dear S——, that little else was thought of besides prayers and preaching. This, however, would be a rash and unjust conclusion, involving a charge of indifference to the "creature comforts" of this life highly injurious to the active character of its good citizens. Alas! the world, with its carnal weak-

nesses and covetous desires, still manages in the midst of all these magnificent offerings to religion to hold its own most wondrously well; and trade is pushed, and pelf puffed, and wealth worried after, and dollars are doubled just the same as elsewhere.

We must beg our kind readers, dear S——, to indulge us with one number, whilst we take them through the Cerean mysteries necessary to elucidate the grounds taken above. And they must be informed, imprimis, that the *world* is so far nip and tuck in the race with the doctrine of self-denial that our town, as well as others, hath actually and verily sprouted from its abundance of worldly proclivities a *homilitical species*, or novel *profession*, which has totally demolished lawyers and constabulary agents. This demolition is so far perfected that the last are here exposed as much as any other class of citizens to the raking fire of these paper-tongued neophytes, whose respectability (though surely unquestionable) is only to be equaled by their admirable assiduity. To define more clearly, I must declare them to be a collateral estate or invention wisely thrust in between the rights of creditors and the tardy remedies of law, to aid the fiscal *pugnacity* of the first, and to particularize the lamentable *universality* of the last.

I wish it distinctly remembered that the *neophytes* deal exclusively in *small matters;* as for those of *larger* dimensions, the superabundance of our town hath carefully and ingeniously provided a higher order of remedy. These neophytes are a distinct and peculiar genus. Like the lilies of the field, "they toil not, neither do they spin," having imbibed the very singular idea that others should "toil and spin" for them. Yet they are by no

means *loafers;* as, although claiming an equal right with this harmless and respectable gentry in the amusement of *box-grinding*, they yet go further, and assert what loafers would scorn to own, that grinding mankind is a far more profitable operation than grinding boxes, and that the last is only allowable on the ground of aiding to perform the first more successfully. They are besides remarkable for greatly mistrusting human memory, and are absolutely desperate for fear of being forgotten between the lapse of one day and another. This will account for their commendable anxiety to aid the first by continuous and friendly remembrances, and must excuse the means they select to guard against the latter catastrophe. They certainly are the most high-headed and independent class in town, and, if the Mayor and Selectmen only knew it, might be made the most efficient policemen. Bow-Street runners in London, with all the terrible associations which cling around that awful name, were never so dreaded as are those neophytes of Main and Market. They take the street with an air of consequence and confidence most admirable to observe, and guard the corners with an alacrity and vigilance which would have caused Cerberus to drop his tail in his very best days. Such is the wholesome influences inspired by their presence that few like to take the risk of a personal encounter, and none are rash enough to accost them without being first saluted. It is doubtful whether a mariner uses half the finesse and tacking to get around Cape Horn that an ordinary man employs to steer clear of a Columbus shark. (There are a genus of *extra*ordinary men, who always go around them with smooth sailing. *Nous verrons.*) To exemplify the amount of independence and

importance which attach to these neophytes, they may, at any time, parade the street from the Court-house to the Eagle Hotel, whilst before their august strides lawyers, and magistrates, and sheriffs, and constables will be seen to fly alike in dismay, and seek the darkness of a convenient alley as the best of earthly friends. No sooner is one descried than the cry of *sauve qui peut* is more hurriedly ejaculated in a crowd of lagging debtors than it was amongst the terrified masses of Napoleon on the fatal of day Waterloo.

Now, let it not be thought that because these gentlemen are high-headed they are at all *swelled headed.* So far from this being the case, they consider none so humble as to be beneath their notice—in proof of which honorable fact let it be here recorded that those whom others *will not* hunt up or notice are sure to be ferreted out and particularly attended to by these useful members of society. But if they cannot be called swelled *heads*, they can lay fair claim to the more euphonious and less offensive title of swelled *pockets.* These last are an *indispensable* appendage to their wardrobe, and are a never-failing index to the character and *profession* of their owner. It is generally said, too, that they prefer to wear coats of a *dun* color, as being more directly indicative of their calling, just as a class of politicians in France are distinguished by the title of *sans cullotte.* These pockets being filled, not with gold and silver, but with the symbols of their authority and office, never fail to command the most solemn and profound respect. This may, therefore, be literally termed honoring *the cloth* of gentlemen —a provincialism I have never before been quite able to interpret.

Who can then say, my dear S——, that our people are so led away by superstitious reverence, as might be argued from the disproportionate number of churches, that they are all unmindful of the bargain and barter, and gains and savings of ordinary rational life? No, we can boast as moral and refined society as any other city; but our people know full well the uses of *every-day* life, and the churches are set apart, as they should be, for Sunday purposes. And, truly, they render the day so graven on one's mind in the days of youth as the day of the Most High, delightful and agreeable even to those who are not accepted worshippers. And I may justly add, dear S——, that few cities are able to emulate Columbus as respects the general attendance of churches, or the sacred observances of the day.

I shall give you my experience, in some future number, of a Sabbath afternoon and evening, in continuation of the opening sketch of a Sabbath morning.

CHAPTER III.

ON HUMBUGS. THE ALLEGORY OF THE SHOEBLACKS.

I HAD paused listlessly, one summer morning, at the corner of Main and Market, opposite the drug establishment of A. N. Jones & Co., and was admiring the peculiar beauties of Columbus at such a moment when, in the absence of all active trade, nothing is to be seen on the streets but a dashing equipage containing some lovely votary of fashion engaged in her diurnal round of shopping, or the contented countenance of a *nonchalant* loafer as he perambulates from one corner to the other in that delectable occupation of *killing time*. It is only at such season, my fair friend, that we are enabled to appreciate *les modes* (in every sense of the term) of this little interior city. But, small as Columbus is, we have yet here a sufficiency of all necessary materials to paint a miniature of the world. The residence of only a twelvemonth will serve to convince the veriest skeptic who presumes to doubt the fact.

I shall here (and, maybe, hereafter) adduce evidences to sustain what I have asserted; and, by way of beginning, let me say that, on the morning in question, I was amused with a very striking and forcible illustration. On every side, and for some distance up and down this main thoroughfare of the city, my eye caught sight of blazing

and gorgeous advertisements, some in large gilt or wooden frames, others simply nailed to doors and facings—all, however, garnished with varied colors, and setting forth the unheard-of and never-to-be-equaled qualities of some newly-discovered or long-established medical preparation, with a farewell hint about what places and what persons have been fixed upon as agencies through which to help mankind to their healthful benefits. Upon entering one or two shops on Main Street, I found, besides the usual display of a fancy establishment, that a great part of the room was decorated with ornaments of this description. There were elixirs, and tinctures, and crack plasters, and sanative salves, and pills, and electuaries, and, in short, more special curatives than I believe there are diseases. You might naturally have supposed that *Death*, on beholding such a fearful preparation of armor to ward off his attacks, would have quit his business in utter despair, and presented the counterpart of "Patience on a monument smiling at Grief." I began to congratulate the present age on the happy prospect of lengthening life and conquering disease; and pain, I thought, would be of such short duration that a few cramps and spasms now and then would be only an agreeable variety, and just serve to enhance the value of pleasure. But unfortunately for the spread of science, these discoverers kept the ingredients of their medicines scrupulously secret. No professional acumen or chemical research could possibly fathom or expose them. Not satisfied with an exclusive patent right, they yet prefer to keep the secret, as in this secrecy dwells much the greater magic. What a comment on human nature! The art of managing mankind consists, then, only in making them stare a little, in keeping up

their astonishment, in letting nothing become familiar to them, but ever having something in the sleeve in which they must think you are deeper than they are. Our accomplished and esteemed friend Shocco (and it gives me true pleasure, dear S——, to rank him as a friend) can doubtless testify, from all accounts, that our own good community is not altogether free from this infirmity; and others there are who insist that we are even blessed with a more than ordinary share of the amiable quality known as credulity. I will not endorse this, but I may venture to tell you what I have seen.

Leaving the shops, I continued my walk leisurely up the street, and whilst still meditating on the medicinal wonders I had just seen, I was attracted by several notices, full pompous notes of exclamation which loomed forth from the trees and posts along the edge of the pavement. I had the curiosity to stop and read one of these, when the following annunciation met my eye, strangely illustrating more potently the thoughts which had occurred to me when looking over the all-healing nostrums and invaluable medical discoveries.

☞ STOP AND READ !!!! ☜

J. H. B. Bigbug, Shoeblack, having determined to settle in Columbus, respectfully offers his professional services to all such as will favor him with their patronage. He belongs to the new school of shoeblacks, having taken his degrees at Goodenbrush College, Ireland, and hopes, should occasion offer, to prove that those who style themselves the *regulars* are the true quacks. The citizens of Columbus may not be aware that new and important discoveries have been made recently in the science of

shoeblacking. Under the benign influence of these valuable discoveries, many boots and shoes which are now fast wearing out and dropping to untimely decay under the pernicious system used at present to keep them bright, will be beautifully restored. The whole substance and constitution of the leather will be resuscitated miraculously quick, without leaving any injurious poisons to undermine and weaken the strength. This may be done, too, at one quarter of the usual expense, and by the use of one hundredth less of blacking than is employed under the old system. His materials being prepared either by himself or experienced agents at the north, he will avouch their being genuine and efficacious. He may always be found (when not professionally engaged) at No. 23 Market St.

You can well imagine, my dear S———, that surprise was my first emotion on reading this unique card, and I found myself involuntarily laughing at the singular assurance, as I then thought it to be, which characterized its author. But, on mixing in with some few friends and acquaintances, I soon found that I must use some caution in speaking out my impressions, and that this Mr. Bigbug was already beginning to take the town by storm. Most every person was his advocate, and many ardently testified to his superior and unheard-of dexterity. I saw that imagination had taken wing, and the numerous instances of his skill which were momentarily recited in my presence almost convinced me that Mr. Bigbug was going to prove the eighth and greatest wonder of the world. One or two of the old shoeblacks, who accidentally passed up the street, and whose faces had been familiar to me for years, looked as blue as indigo, whilst a sardonic sneer

curled their lips. I saw that if, like Cæsar, they were doomed to fall, they had made up their minds to fall with dignity at the base of Pompey's statue.

Weeks and months succeeded and rolled away, and still the wondrous achievements of Mr. Bigbug were the theme of everybody's conversation. Shoes which had lain moldering for years in the garret, and which defied all the efforts of the old shoeblack, were made to shine under his magic touch more brightly than a barber's basin. Boots which had been dismissed from service time out of mind, and thought utterly impervious to all recuperative efforts, borrowed suddenly all their ancient polish, and emitted such a luminous effulgence that a dandy might use them to see how to curl his whiskers. How soft the soles had become! how pliant the tops were! how springy the heels felt! You would have supposed that Mr. Bigbug's touch had done the work of a six month's soaking, and that the wearer was sufficiently inspired to leap a ten-rail fence with stakes and riders. And all this too was done by Mr. Bigbug alone—and no one else knew or could know how it was done without a regular course of apprenticeship under Mr. Bigbug. Some actually averred that he was more than mortal, and that he knew too much for any good. His habits were not like those of other shoeblacks. He did not load himself with brushes had boxes; he had only to distill from a jaybird's quill the least part of a strange-looking fluid, and then touch the shoe once or twice slightly with a feather from the wing of a whip-poor-will, and the work was done, and all over. No noise of rubbing and scrubbing accompanied his efforts; no smell of lampblack and turpentine could offend the nostrils after he

was done with boots. He had also been heard to confound the wisest of his profession, and to declare that he depended not alone on the natural properties of his blacking. All these things were closely and reverently treasured, and the old housewives and octogenary men, who had been raised up under the regular dynasty of shoeblacks, piously declared that they feared to touch any boot or shoe which had been cleaned with his blacking and feather. His name and fame were soon spread abroad, and Mr. Bigbug was often sent for from distant places to carry the benefits of his novel art of blacking boots and shoes. He would return from such visits in any kind of weather, caring neither for rain, nor lightning, nor thunder, and was frequently heard galloping furiously along the road at midnight, striking fire at every step of his horse, like any romping, devil-may-care goblin. How could all this result otherwise than in building up for Mr. Bigbug a prodigious popularity, overshadowing the pretensions of all other shoeblacks?

But his admirers did not suffer his claims to pre-eminence to rest even here. Many asserted that his blacking seemed to impart an elasticity and vigor to the fibres and sinews of the foot which aided the operation of walking no little, and that water could not so much as light on a boot or shoe he had once touched, let alone penetrating the leather. Others again declared that they had, under his direction, used his preparation with the greatest amount of profit on their plantations, and that brogans which had been lime-eaten by the prairie mud and laid aside for a year as past use, were suddenly restored to all their ancient toughness, and made to answer the purpose of a new purchase. In fact, marvels mul-

tiplied and wonders increased to such an extent that the appearance of Mr. Bigbug on the streets was sure to produce universal gaping and staring, and even the old shoeblacks would look at him as a sort of natural curiosity. Cabals and consultations were several times put in requisition with a view to his dethronement, but all failed signally. Mr. Bigbug was, beyond all comparison or competition, *the* bigbug of Columbus.

Now, my dear S——, without at all intending to disparage Mr. Bigbug (who, by the by, was really an accomplished and deserving shoeblack), let us endeavor to analyze this furor of our people for novelty. Does it proceed from conviction or faith? I confess that I think, in this connection, of Ovid's opening line to the Metamorphosis—"In nova fert animus." Novelty is, it seems, the emblem of mankind, the Circe of the world. Few are touched with the sublime spectacle of the sun rising, as Virgil says, from its coral bed to light up the world; but everybody runs if a little sparkling meteor happens to dash athwart that blue mass of vapors which we call the heavens. Unfortunately, we soon learn to despise what is common or familiar:—

> "Vilia sunt nobis quæcumque prioribus annis
> Vidimus, et sordet quidquid spectavimus olim."

Indeed, my fair friend, Charlatanism, if not the twin sister, seems ever to have been the handmaiden of science. The votaries of science have never been able to dispense with or get rid of it. Every one erects his own systems, or tangents of a system, of physics, metaphysics, and theology, and all will find disciples in this wonder-loving, novelty-courting world. True science in

any of its numerous branches must be too patiently pursued; its propositions are too profound ever to acquire extended influence or rabid popularity for its professors. To do this, the fancy must be put to work, the imagination kindled, the judgment seduced by some captivating and ephemeral ruse, the reason surprised and diverted, and all the superstition with which our natures are charged actively and skilfully aroused. Mystery is a most powerful enchantress, and although science is now simplified and directed to the reason and common sense of men, it has not outlived its connection, in former ages, with occult and supernatural agencies. If you cure a patient with a cobweb pill drawn from the walls of his own room, and afterwards tell him of your practice, it is ten chances to one he ever gets well again under the same treatment. A celebrated and successful French physician said, when dying, that he left two old and great physicians behind him—viz., simple diet and pure water—and yet how many have ever acted or would consent to act on such advice when plausible but disguised treatment was held out as a bait. The most important matters, when they have become familiar, are no longer considered with wonder or solicitude, and that only strikes and affects us which is rare and mysterious. Faith, at last, is the touchstone of the human mind, and faith is often at war with common sense, and to a great extent annihilates reason. The Arab, who besides being a good calculator is a learned chemist and fine astronomer, nevertheless takes by faith the story, related in the Koran, that Mahomet cleft the moon in twain and put one-half in his sleeve. He is above common sense in the three sciences alluded to, and beneath it in the matters of his

faith about the moon. His reason acts in the first and his judgment leads him to conviction; in the last, both reason and judgment are annihilated. He has seen one with his own eyes, and perfected his own intelligence; in the second, he has used the eyes of another. And yet, which is the most palatable, and which could he be induced to surrender first? The occult, the mysterious, the incomprehensible, always inspire a species of adoration —sometimes even from the most intelligent. But it is the silent homage of blind faith, not the lucid convictions of reason and judgment.—Charlatans of every profession, ever shrewd and sagacious, dextrously avail themselves of this amiable infirmity of our natures, and we are oftentimes surprised into a pertinacious belief before the first proposition is settled and impulse determines what reason alone should consider.

Promising, dear S——, to let your hear from me again shortly, I am for the present, and until then only,

A RAMBLER.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Pynsent Plainlove, in a letter to the Rambler, describes the odds and ends of his first and only visit to Columbus on a shopping expedition with his family.

The following letter, my dear S——, is only the beginning of a series now in my desk. Indeed, I fear that my kind and worthy correspondents will multiply quite too rapidly for my purposes, as I am by no means willing to play the part of conductor to all their discontents and mishaps. I have now by my side a letter from Mrs. Winny Wiggins, complaining dolorously of a benevolent *mania* which she declares to have seized her husband, and maintaining that he never discovered any symptoms of such a malady until he came to Columbus. Then there is a communication from a learned Quaker friend, and an astute Mormon catechumen, both called forth from some remarks in my two first numbers. Also an epistle from a Mr. Mansfield Coke, formerly a law student in Columbus, giving an account of his first appearance among our *élite*. But to begin :—

Frogmarsh, *April 24th*, 1849.

To the Author of the Rambler :—

Finding, sir, in the columns of my last "Democrat," one of a series of interesting domestic sketches, which I observe you are furnishing to the reading public, I have

concluded that a letter from me descriptive of a visit I made with my wife and daughters to Columbus some time ago, might prove very acceptable. The tone and manner of your sketch concerning my old acquaintance Bigbug amused me mightily, and for that reason I send you this. You must know, sir, that I am a plain, unpretending, homespun sort of a man, about fifty years of age, with a wife, two grown-up daughters, and a smart-sized stump of a boy for my white family. I moved from Tennessee some three years ago, and liking the Buttahatchie country better than the prairie lands, I bought my present estate of Frogmarsh, situated some twenty miles from Columbus, and on which I work fifteen likely hands, without owing a dollar in the world beyond my store accounts. Our neighbors are all simple matter-of-fact sort of people, making no pretensions to anything extra, but yet good enough in every sense to suit me. But my wife and girls are (or set up for being) quite of a different stamp. They aim to cut a figure on every occasion, pique themselves on having an *instinct* about affairs of fashion, (though I assure you, sir, they never saw a really fashionable lady but once in their whole lifetimes), and run me yearly to no little expense in maintaining a sort of show, which I notice gives rise to more staring always than either envy or imitation.

Nothing would do one morning last spring but they must fix up and pay a visit to town for the purpose, as they termed it, of shopping. We were used generally to move about on horseback, but nothing would do now of less respectability than a carriage. My poor old mother, who died last year, had an old hack of a barouche with a huge dickey seat and movable top, which she had left me

on her dying bed as a memento of her earliest married life, not at all with a view to its use or value. We had not used it since the day we landed in Mississippi, and time had dealt very considerably and evidently with it. Part of the top and one lamp were entirely missing, and with all the search imaginable could not be paraded; and, besides, the harness had so fallen to pieces that I had to destroy several rope halters to tie them decently together. A pair of substantial plough bridles and two stout shuck collars, in lieu of those which had been lost, made the gears, at length, complete; but where to find suitable horses was the next difficulty. I had several nice fillies and fine colts, whose spirited looks and glossy coats would have made quite a good appearance had I been able to have persuaded my women to go a horseback; but as for working them in a vehicle, you might as well have tried to hitch up a brace of wild bucks. The only resource was to take two of the farm mules, whose natural vicious dispositions had been sufficiently subdued by age and hard service, and which might, therefore, be safely ventured without the least apprehension of a dangerous prank. The next greatest obstacle was to find a driver, for amongst all my men not one had ever handled a carriage rein, and my mother's coachman had died a month or so before his mistress, of chronic rheumatism. My wife's ingenuity, however, came to her aid in this pinch, and she determined to risk old Jerry, a superannuated negro, who had been thrown in to me at a gentleman's sale the year before, to go along with his wife and child whom I had purchased. The old fellow had been raised to the business, but had not driven for many years, and, before setting out, fairly owned to me that in crossing

rugged places he dreaded a fall, as he had entirely forgotten how to motion for the play of the springs. But no excuse would now answer my wife and the girls, and, treating him to a stiff dram of rum to brighten his spirits, as they said, they insisted on dressing him off in a suit of my old Kentucky jeans, though there was full a foot and a half difference in our heights, not taking into account the old fellow's bow legs, which, I assure you, sir, described a complete circle betwixt the hips and the feet.

Thus arranged, we sat out, my wife and the girls in the barouche, whilst I rode one of my blooded mares, with my son behind. But the plan had liked to have failed from the very start. Not being used to their new caparisons, my mules would not budge a foot from their tracks, although Mrs. Plainlove and my girls kindly endeavored to aid by rocking their bodies to and fro so as to coax them to keep up the motion; whilst old Jerry, mounted on the dickey with all his ancient dignity, stamped terribly on the dash-board, keeping up, at the same time, such a constant clucking and whistling that I feared the muscles of his mouth would tire down soon in the action. The worst of it was that my foreman had absolutely forbidden the use of a whip as sure to produce a fit of violent and dangerous kicking up. Failing in all other attempts, the old fellow seemed at last to conjecture that his mules were not sufficiently aware of their liberty to move, and he would lean forward and throw the reins loosely about their hips so coaxingly and indulgently that I made sure the hint would be taken. Not so, however, and I had at length to call one of my plough lads to assist us, who, unbuckling the reins and advising the old driver to hold on steady, gave the lead mule such a monstrous jerk

by the mouth, at the same time kicking her violently in the side, that they both started off in a full trot, not stopping until they came to the big gate, the boy in the mean time running along at the side.

Without stopping, sir, to recover the various little mishaps which fell to on the way, such as stalling now and then, an occasional break about some part of our rickety vehicle, and one or two falls on the part of old Jerry, all of which gave great offence to my wife and the girls, whilst it tickled our mischievous pet of a boy beyond measure, I will just say that we reached town just five minutes after eleven o'clock, having started from home about a half hour before day. As we got opposite the Baptist church, a large quality carriage, filled with as starchy a set of fine ladies as I ever had seen in Nashville, and drawn by two fiery bay horses, rushed passed us in full trot, and it made such a flashy appearance beside our old crazy barouche that I repented sorely, plain a man as I am, I had humored my women in allowing them to come in that way. When we got into the main streets, I soon noticed that our looks and equipage produced quite a sensation. The sight of the fine carriage, Mr. Rambler, had recalled to old Jerry some of his former coachman glory, for he was now grinning most hideously, with his mouth stretched from ear to ear (although, sir, he had not a single tooth in his head); whilst my girls, who had observed one or two gentlemen acquaintances on Market Street, kept bobbing and ducking their heads at a rate which left no doubt of the great pleasure they felt at the recognition. I thought that I detected a smothered laugh on the lips of one of these sparks as his eye fell on old Jerry and the mules; and on the corner, when

another bowed as we passed, I actually saw him clap his hand to his mouth the minute after, and force a violent fit of phthisic to conceal his rudeness. I really could not blame them much, but I thought, as they had been many a time at the bran dances which my girls give occasionally in the summer season, that they might have tried a little harder to greet with decency and respect the first visit the poor creatures had ever made to town. We made but slow progress up the street, despite of the vigorous clucking and drumming which old Jerry managed to keep up in order to divert the attention of his mules (which really looked about as much pleased as any inside of the carriage); and it was not without considerable scuffling that we at length drew up in front of a large store, and prepared to alight. We were acquainted with the storekeeper and his principal clerk, and, knowing my snug means, and plain, punctual business ways, they received us with every possible demonstration of joy, shaking hands cordially with my wife and the girls, and kindly saying that they hoped we had come at last to make a big bill. I could not but be gratified at the warmth of their behavior, but their fine manners put my women into such an ecstasy of good humor that I feared they would go too far, in returning it, for my notions of economy. When we entered the store, two or three of the younger clerks, who were seated near the door, observing the marked deference and pleasure with which we had inspired their superiors, bounced up from their seats with astonishing agility, and then, not taking time to walk around, slid over the counters with a motion like that of so many terrapins sunning themselves on some old floating log.

We were now all arranged along the main counter at tolerably regular distances apart, with a view, I suppose, to full room for action, mounted on high slender stools, with a salesman stationed obligingly opposite to each. I confess these ominous preparations caused me to blench slightly, but as it was now greatly too late to draw out, I had to content myself with a resolve to sit still and look sharply to the affair. I observed, however, with some uneasiness, that the storekeeper was adopting the same sort of tactics on his side, for he stood apart from the rest, leaning on the show-case, with his eye fixed steadily on his clerks all the time. I endeavored by various feints and demonstrations to draw him from his position, but as he did not show any attention I soon gave over in despair.

My wife and her daughters asked first to look at some calicoes and nankeens. All hands immediately fell to work, and bolt after bolt was dashed on the counter with such a rapid succession of booms that I verily thought they would strip every shelf before stopping, besides the risk of some stray one falling over and upsetting all three of my women, who were perched up much higher, any way, than they had ever been accustomed to. After thus piling the counter, the head clerk, who was serving wife, just to the left of my place, unrolled a piece of stout goods, and, catching a crimp or two between his thumb and forefinger, would give a kind of the most dextrous snap I ever beheld, by way of proving its strength. Satisfied with this proof, besides admiring the color and texture, my wife ordered ten yards to be cut off and laid aside. The yardstick was produced, and, having cut off the requisite number, he took from his vest pocket a neat

pair of scissors, and as my wife was kindly preparing to hold the part next to her that she might assist in cutting straight, he just made the least bit of a slit at the point he had marked, and then, twirling it nimbly up and dropping the scissors, jerked the cloth asunder with a sudden smash that started every nerve in my body to work, whilst my wife, finnicky and starchy as she was looking, fairly ducked her head for wonder. In a trice more it was wrapped and tied, and then tossing it away up, whirling over and over, he caught it alertly in one hand, to the delight of my little boy by me, who watched these capers with every sign of astonishment. We next intimated a desire to look at some crockery ware, leaving Hannah and Charity to finish our purchases of dry goods, and were marched off to a different part of the house, filled with crockery, cutlery, and various species of hardware. Here this agreeable young man began a round of caprioles, which convinced me that he had set out to fulfil the hopes of a big bill sure enough. He laid his right hand on a pile of different-sized dishes, and gave them such a terrible shake and jingle that I really thought it had been his intention to break them to pieces; but, before the trembling motion into which he had thrown them fairly ceased, he managed to extract one from the middle almost without our seeing so much even as the attempt, and in another instant it was balanced on the ball of his thumb, and being slung around at the rate of half a dozen times the second. This sleight-o'-hand work being over, and the requisite number of plates, dishes, tureens, slop-bowls and sugar-vases duly set aside, all which he averred to be of the very best quality then manufactured, he next showed us some tumblers. Here

again he ventured a trial to prove the stoutness of his ware, which I thought wholly unnecessary, for, seizing one of them, he hurled the bottom down on the counter with a violence and ferocity of look which argued nothing short of destructiveness. But my wife, who was a shrewd, sharp-witted woman (although a little too frickety on the score of humoring our girls' fashionable airs), was not to be caught by such pretences as that, and luringly asked the young gentleman to try the mettle of his tumbler in the same way on the other end. This he declined, however, saying, very properly, that the design of making the bottom so hard and heavy was to guard the other end, as in the event of a fall it was thus sure to light on its bottom. I treasured this remark, Mr. Rambler, and have often thought since how many things in this world were too top-heavy for the bottom they carried.

When we got back to where the girls were dealing, we found Hannah trying to fit her head to a Leghorn bonnet, assisted by one of the younger clerks, who obligingly held a small looking-glass before her face. Our friend, the head clerk, seeing this, ran up to the girl, and declaring he had saved one of these bonnets expressly for her to buy, took hold of the sides of the one she was trying on, and bent it nimbly about her cheeks, once or twice managing to clasp it under her chin, and then ended by saying that it fitted her every way, to which I could plainly see my girl was fully agreed. At the same time, Charity was endeavoring to fit on a pair of kid slippers, and was seated, in her stocking feet, on a trunk which stood in a passage between the counters. Our accommodating friend had an eye also for this business, and I saw him select out a bronze-colored pair, and after

expatiating on their beauty and suitableness, proceeded himself to take hold of my daughter's foot and thrust it into the shoe, declaring that he never saw a pair go on so smoothly. He then caused her to stand up, and himself seizing her frock and petticoats, with one hand clasped them tightly around her ankle, whilst with the other he pressed the shoe more closely to the foot, so that she might see and admire the full fit, protesting that he never beheld anything more beautiful in his life. I did not hear any dissent, either, to any of these propositions on the part of Charity, and felt I would certainly have the bronze slippers as well as the Leghorn bonnet both to pay for.

Gloves were next asked after, and Mr. Fred. Smiley (which was the head clerk's name) declared boldly he could show the prettiest ever brought to this market. Upon this he took down a neat paper box, and, pulling up the top, displayed, I must say, as handsome a variety as I had ever seen, though totally unsuited to plain country people like ourselves. There were blue, and pink, and yellow, and purple, all shining in very taking arrangement. I saw the eyes of both mother and daughters fairly blaze up at once, but when Mr. Smiley suggested that they would be so nice for those fine bran dances at Frogmarsh (and the sly rogue had been at many a one), I saw that he had made the master hit of the day, for my women all made a dash to secure a pair right off. The two girls succeeded in squeezing on a pair without much difficulty, but their poor old mother, who had gone through substantial service in her day, found it not so easy to pull hers on, and expressed some fear of tearing them. Whereupon Mr. Smiley drew forth a large singularly

formed set of wooden tweezers (for I can call them nothing else, for the life of me), which he introduced by turn into each finger of the glove, causing them all to flare out softly and snugly enough. Thus aided, my wife was enabled to run her fingers in with all ease in the world, and declared that the tweezers had just done the thing exactly to her hand; in fact, she said, better than if they had been made for her.

Whilst all this flaunting was a-going on, Mr. Rambler, I turned to one of the clerks, and simply asked to look at a sample of shoes which might do for our little boy (some six years old), intending not to commit myself to buy a pair if I should not be mightily pleased. Whether it was that he half-way suspected this from my manner of speaking, or that he had caught a cue from his superior, I know not, but instead of taking out only a few pairs to show me, he called another to his aid, and to my chagrin and confusion, he handed forth a huge drawer full of them, and, with a glib twirl, emptied the whole contents on the counter before me. After all this trouble on their part, I could not think of disappointing them, and of course chose one or two pairs of shoes, when I might have done very well without any. This brought to a close the purchases we had intended to make, and a few more, but when I would have had my women prepare to leave, Mr. Smiley insisted that we might need other articles, and as we were now in town, suggested that we had best make hay while the sun shone. I, of course, understood all this as being nothing more than talk, but my fashionable ladies thought it might be deemed rude to leave so abruptly, and kindly intimated their willingness to look at anything which Mr. Smiley

should desire to show them. With this he fell to afresh, and fairly charmed them with the sight of perfume vials, and scented soaps, and fancy combs, and flashy ribbons. He then persuaded himself that we might want a looking-glass, and catching up a couple he carried them nimbly to and fro before the girls' faces; and although they so struck in the sun once or twice as almost to strike the whole of us stone blind, yet the poor creatures looked delighted. These being also declined, he next took it into his head that my wife wanted a new parlor carpet, and, without waiting for a reply, yea or nay, ran to a place on the counter where several huge bolts were standing upright, and with a heavy blow of his fist he tumbled one of the largest on the floor. Cutting the threads which confined it, in an instant, he stepped back, and with a monstrous kick, which I thought would have disjointed every toe on his foot, he started the bolt to unfolding itself at a most rapid and furious gate, and indeed it continued to run out until it was stopped by the door of the counting-room. The figures were so pretty, and the quality so fine, that Mrs. Plainlove at once decided to purchase a carpet; but I objected peremptorily, because of the impossibility of our ever getting home if that was added to the present load, even allowing that my saddle-bags should be crowded chock full. Our friend, however, manfully protested that he could so pack it the weight would never be felt, and the room it would take just nothing at all. So the carpet, Mr. Rambler, was bought, and it being then after two o'clock, we prepared at last to start home.

This was, though, much easier prepared for than executed, in our situation. When I came to look in the ba-

rouche, I found such mountains of bundles and boxes that I utterly despaired of seeing my women so squeezed in as to be comfortably seated; and even if we succeeded in that, I began to think it very doubtful whether old Jerry, exhausted as he was, could prevail on his team to undertake the pulling part.

But I must reserve this, Mr. Rambler, for another number, having extended this further already than your worthy publisher may fancy.

Yours, with due regard,
PYNSENT PLAINLOVE.

Of course, my dear S——, I did not calculate otherwise when beginning these sketches than that I should, in time, have quite a number of collateral correspondents, among whom I value none higher than your excellent and simple-minded friend Mr. Plainlove, and with whom we are both so well acquainted. I have often shared his abundant and cheerful hospitality, and though his dwelling may not be always easily found, yet it is none the less pleasant after you once get there; and if his person shall not be easily identified, it is because his visits are always unostentatious, having never before or since come to town with his family. A RAMBLER.

CHAPTER V.

Mrs. Winny Wiggins, in a letter to the Rambler, gives an account of her marital wrongs, with a thrust at Free Masons, Odd Fellows, and Sons of Temperance.

I HOPE, my dear S——, that the following apropos epistle, from a fair correspondent, will not be considered as at all deprecatory of that commendable spirit of benevolence which characterizes our community in the respect alluded to in the letter. It appears to be simply the testimony of a plain woman regarding a praiseworthy *monomania*, which prevails quite extensively in our city.

It were well for mankind, my dear friend, if there existed no more harmful species of mania, and its existence and popularity here is doubtless the mainspring to that active and unparalleled generosity which so widely alleviates distress and aids misfortune, and which renders Columbus a pleasant abode to all who have ever experienced within its bounds the heavy-heartedness of adversity. But for fear that further remarks may tend to prejudge the matter of the following letter, I desist, and go on to transcribing it for publication.

COLUMBUS, *April 13th*, 1849.

TO THE AUTHOR OF THE RAMBLER:—

You must not think me indelicately forward or impertinent, Mr. Rambler, because I take the liberty of address-

ing you before trying to find out who and what you are. I shall leave to others the agreeable task of conjecturing both these, not deeming them at all important to my purpose, which is to ask that you adopt and bring what follows before the public in a suitable and receivable shape. I am not used to writing for papers; being a plain and poorly educated woman (like the majority of my unfortunate sex, to the shame of mankind), with a plenty of children and household duties to occupy my whole time and attention. But if I cannot round off smooth sentences, and string together metaphorical pearls, I trust I know, at least, how to make myself understood—which is not to be said (asking your pardon) of *all* who write now-a-days.

It is not customary, Mr. Rambler, for ladies to disclose their ages, but I will begin my story by telling you that *I* was just twenty-nine yesterday. I was married near ten years ago to a young man of fine habits and good business turn, who was tolerable well off in life, and Providence has blessed our union with nine likely children, who are alive and healthy at this time.

Before removing to Columbus (which was year before last), my husband kept store in a pretty little village of Alabama, and people never lived more happily than we. My husband was full of tenderness and attention, and I endeavored to perform all the duties of a good and devoted wife. After the close of the day's labors, and when the children were romping and rattling through the humble little cottage which we had rented, it used to bring tears of joy to my eyes as I watched his cheerful and contented looks. He often declared to me then, Mr. Rambler, that the sight of my face (though, indeed, sir, my looks are but home-

ly), at such moments of domestic hilarity, was to him the loveliest in the world, and that no out-of-door pleasures could ever compensate for being absent from that happy circle which gathered nightly around our own fireside. But those delightful days are now at an end, and I shall always lay the blame to our removal here.

The sources of unhappiness in my situation are very different from those of other unfortunate married persons. It is not of my husband's idleness or extravagance, his ill temper or his avarice, that I have to complain; neither does it proceed from diminution of our conjugal affections, or disagreement in our religious or domestic matters. In fact, Mr. Rambler, the cause must be explained at large; it cannot be told in one word, or expressed in any single term.

You must know, then, that about three months after our arrival here, my husband joined the church. In this I heartily sympathized, and, after a short time, followed his good example. Our circle of friends soon increased, and all went on smoothly and pleasantly enough, though I could not help regretting that my husband left us so very often of nights to attend prayer meeting, or other sorts of meetings connected with the business of our church. I trust that the indulgence of this regret was not wrong, but what with absences to attend these, and the constant arrivals of strange ministers from a distance, who preached of nights, I seldom had the pleasure of enjoying my husband's company after tea, and already began to look back with fondness to the happy days of our early married life, when every evening brought a return of domestic bliss around our quiet fireside. Alas! little did I dream

then of what I would, in the end, be compelled to undergo in these respects.

A month or two subsequently to his joining the church, I observed my husband busily poring over a little pamphlet, night after night, when he was at home. In vain I tried to overlook him unawares, to find out the nature of what so attracted and absorbed his attention. He was, however, always too quick for me, and would manage to change his position just in the nick of time, to prevent my getting sight of a single word. At length, one evening, directly after tea, he abruptly left us, when I knew that there was no church meeting, and was absent until long after the nine o'clock bell had rung. I had retired at least an hour before he came in, perfectly tired out with waiting, and the children were all soundly asleep on the trundle-bed. On returning, he undid the door-bolt without the slightest creaking, and advancing cautiously on tiptoe through the room, whisked off his clothes in a trice, and slid softly into the bed, hoping not to awaken any one. This conduct very naturally surprised me, and of course I could not refrain from asking where in the world he had been. Imagine if you can, Mr. Rambler, the consternation and despair with which I was seized, when he informed me that he had just been initiated as a *mason!* Heavens! I had liked to have jumped out of my skin, and so far from sleeping, I did not so much as close my eyes the enduring night, and suffered all the next day with a violent headache in consequence. Here, thought I, is the beginning, truly, of the end to our lovely little family gatherings and cheerful home-joys; and although my husband attempted to justify the step he had taken on the score of usefulness and enlarged

benevolence, I confess that I was far from being reconciled.

We were now rarely together oftener than three nights out of the week, and the pleasure of his company on these occasions was always half marred by the thought that others now divided his evening hours with wife and children. But this is not all, Mr. Rambler. A day or two afterwards I had occasion to ask my husband for ten dollars, intending to gratify my baby, and relieve myself of such constant nursing, by purchasing the gum-elastic baby-jumper which Mr. F——r had advertised as the only "one of the same sort left," when he excused himself by saying that he really was short of money, having just paid out thirty dollars for the *Blue-Lodge degrees.* I did not then reply, but you may rest assured, Mr. Rambler, that I did not fail to *think* what, as a good wife, I was unwilling to speak out. Well, I managed to digest my chagrin in the best way I could, and was beginning to get somewhat used to this state of existence, when my happiness of mind was again invaded by a shock of the same character, only it was much more severe. Not satisfied with absenting himself to prayer meetings (which was proper enough), and degree meetings at the Blue Lodge, I observed that my husband was becoming again abstracted and thoughtful, and in less than a week afterwards I missed him the second time, for three mortal hours after supper. My fears were kindled in an instant, and I tortured myself with the idea that another step was about being interposed between my husband and his family joys. He returned much about the same time as before, and went through the same precautionary evolutions in preparing for bed. But my eyes had not been

once closed, and again I surprised him by inquiring where on earth he had been so long. He answered evasively at first, but I pressed the question so vigorously that he was forced, at last, fairly to own he had just joined the *Odd Fellows*. Good gracious, Mr. Rambler, how do you suppose I received this news? I could scarcely support the shock, and as the remembrance of the dear lovely evenings at home, which once had made us so happy, floated through my mind, tears came involuntarily to my eyes, and sorrow seated herself within my heart. Unable to perceive the least degree of plausibility in the reiterated argument of increased benevolence, and more wide-spread usefulness, connected with this last Order, I surrendered to the woful conviction that all this was to be purchased at the expense of that cheerful comfort which had once charmed the long winter night, and caused the very walls of our little cottage to smile and look glad.

Again was another night or two of the week snatched from that prized list which had been formerly all ours, and the children and myself had to make the best of it we could. But this was not all in *this* instance either. It was now clever winter weather, and one morning at the breakfast-table I begged my husband to attend Mr. K——r's auction that night, as I understood things were a-going just for nothing at all, and buy me a bolt or two of linsey-woolsey to make winter frocks for the girls, and slips for the little boys. Again I was mortified with a refusal, and with a request from him to wait awhile, as he had been forced to spend ten dollars more in going through the *initiatory degree* of Odd Fellowship. So, thought I (determined to keep count of the cost from this day forth),

my husband has thus far paid forty dollars for the privilege of being benevolent and useful, besides the weekly contributions he gives to these two fraternities, which profess, both, the *same* objects. Winter passed and spring came, and Columbus was literally and suddenly put all agog about Father Mathew and the Sons of Temperance. From the way people talked, Mr. Rambler, I really expected that Mr. S——l and Capt. S——n would make a bonfire of all their fine liquors in a day or two, as a grand holocaust to this resurrected phœnix of Temperance. You would have supposed that such things as mint-juleps and sherry-cobblers would never again sparkle on a gentleman's sideboard, and that Christmas morning would no more be made merry by bowls of foaming egg-nog, and tankards of bubbling Tom and Jerry. My poor husband was transported with enthusiasm, and, although, as I verily believe, he never drank so much as a pint of ardent spirits in his whole lifetime, was among the first who stepped forward to *form the division*. To all my remonstrances he turned an inattentive ear, and insisted that I should even throw away a small cask of sour Teneriffe, which I had kept on hand to flavor my sauces with. He declared it was worse than arsenic or any poison, and announced his intention to make spruce beer and ginger-pop his only beverages for the balance of his life. To my very natural inquiry why he, who never used spirituous liquors, should wish to pay his money and time away for a pledge, he returned for answer that it was for *example's* sake, although, I assure you, Mr. Rambler, that his mildness and tolerance of temper are such that he could never use the language of rebuke, even

though a drunken man should annoy him for half a day at a time.

I thought all this very proper talk, but you perceive, Mr. Rambler, that it was only another step towards destroying, finally, our fireside evening gatherings, and family convivialities. It so happened, too, a short time after this last adventure of Mr. Wiggins's, that I was seized with a distracting toothache; and when I asked him to step around to the drug store and buy me a vial of the drops which I had seen a cruel-looking man, with a cunning leer, shaking at a demure, suffering creature, who was painted by him on the same picture, I was told that his last spare change had just been paid out for the *privilege* of setting a good example, and that I must try to ease my pain with laudanum and hot poultices. I think you will agree with me, Mr. Rambler, that this was more than even the best of wives should endure, and I felt bound to let him have a piece of my mind. I said that I could not see why a man should want to join half a dozen Orders, all possessing the same principles, just to learn benevolence, and be a member of the church too. This was the first time I had ever tried such an experiment, and I think my argument stumped him for a while; but, so far from its having inspired the wholesome influence I looked for, guess my surprise, Mr. Rambler, when, on asking for a small sum, soon afterwards, to buy Jemima, our eldest girl, a pair of Sunday slippers, I was told that he had just sent in his last loose dollar with a petition to join what he called the *Fountain!* His excuse for this last project was that he wished to encourage the *rising* generation.

Thus you see, Mr. Rambler, that I have witnessed, step by step, the gradual decay of my husband's love for his former domestic pleasures; and, what with three sorts of Masonry, two kinds of Odd Fellowship, two classes of Temperance Sons, and the Lord only knows how many Fountains (not to mention the weekly prayer-meetings), my last hope of a return to the delightful mode of life which charmed our early days of marriage has vanished. When you cast into account that the days are all taken up in attention to business, you will believe me when I say, Mr. Rambler, that I never see my husband except at meal-time and bed-time. To these, I thank God, he is yet quite punctual, but how long it will be before this inventive people will get hold of some other plan of spoiling domestic joys I am not able to say. Indeed, Mr. Rambler, so much have I taken these manifold deprivations to heart, that the sound of that abominable little bell, dinging and donging almost every blessed evening, to assemble some one of the lodges, always throws me into a nervous fit, which I fear will end in settled hysterics. Some two or three months ago, I felt so alarmed at the rapid increase of this malady, which has seized Mr. Wiggins, that I called on our minister, the Rev. Mr. Ezekiel Maultext, and dutifully laid my complaints before him for counsel and advice. He positively declined taking any part, saying that Mr. Wiggins was *exemplary* as a man and Christian, and even insinuated that *I* should pray for a contented and calm mind. Thus, failing in everything else, Mr. Rambler, I determined to give him a view of himself in your moral looking-glass, hoping some good effect may be produced. If such shall be the

happy consequences of your publishing this letter, you will insure the lasting gratitude of a disconsolate wife.

Yours, &c.

WINNY WIGGINS.

I am half inclined, dear S——, after a careful examination of the foregoing letter, to agree with the prudent Mr. Maultext in his opinion of the true remedy necessary to reconcile the disconsolate Mrs. Wiggins. It is clear that my correspondent does not understand the nature and polity of the excellent institutions she complains about; and, although we may be inclined to coincide with her at first about the *taste* of joining all of them when, perhaps, any one ought to have satisfied his benevolent thirst, yet we must not rashly condemn Mr. Wiggins, who will, doubtless, take an early occasion to vindicate himself. We should be careful about believing that so worthy a man could coldly neglect his family duties, and, from mere idle curiosity, "seek to run a muck" through all these meritorious fraternities. I will not deny but what I think there is much good sense, and vastly more truth, in the old maxim, "a Jack at all trades, and master of none;" and I am prepared to admit that there is danger in subdividing our interests and sympathies. It is a policy ill adapted to develop that *unity* of strength so essential in perfecting all useful projects, and may beget a restlessness and inconstancy of mind seriously deleterious in their results. It certainly tends to weaken salutary influence in any one sphere, and to inspire a species of distrust even with the least severe and suspicious. A man would do poor business who undertakes to do, all in the same breath, the work of doctor, and lawyer, and

parson, while he professes to be a planter. His neighbors would be induced to question the depth of his interest in any one of these callings, and to doubt his sincerity in all. But I hope, dear S——, that Mr. Wiggins will not take these remarks as intended to aim at him. They are thrown out merely by way of general annunciation, and I would not, for the world, be thought capable of attempting to prejudge his defence. I have no doubt but that he will make all appear straight and justifiable.

A RAMBLER.

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Mansfield Coke, in a letter to the Rambler, describes his first appearance in the circles of the *élite.*

BLACKSTONEVILLE, ALA., *May 17th,* 1849.

TO THE AUTHOR OF THE RAMBLER:—

Having learned from a friend, sir, that you were engaged in compiling a number of sketches for the amusement and edification of the public, I make bold, without waiting for a ceremonious introduction, to send you the following, with the humble hope that it may be found to suit your purpose.

I know not if you will recognize me—but several years ago I was a law student in your city, and had the pleasure to meet with you on several occasions, though no formal acquaintance was made; and I studied in the office of one of your most *prominent* lawyers, who kindly instructed me without remuneration, and through my connection with him was occasionally introduced into some of the most accomplished and fashionable families of the city. I was the son of poor parents, and had been raised very plainly. When I had reached about my fifteenth year, it happened that a strolling phrenologist passed my father's house, and, it being quite late, made application to spend the night. This could not be refused, and after supper he approached my seat, and running his fingers inquisitively about various parts of my head, put on a

face of astonishment, as though he had made some great discovery. My father, who was rather a choleric old gentleman, took it into his head that the fellow was making game of me in our own house, and doubled his right fist quite ominously; at which the operator only laughed, and then said he had been examining the organs of my head. He declared that the developments were extraordinary, and rubbed his fingers over several hard knots, which he declared to be certain evidences of genius. Upon this, my father and mother followed in the examination, and, believing most implicitly everything that was told them, began right away to calculate their abilities to give me a good education. All this soon transpired in the neighborhood, and I became the wonder of the girls, and the envy of the lads. I was the hero of all the quilting parties, and led off in every dance with the choice partners in the room. In short, I was generally recognized as the big spark of the range, and when it was announced that I was soon to start to a classical school far distant, preparatory to entering upon the study of the law, the deference to my person was increased, and my head began to swell. I worshiped phrenology as a hidden mystery, and blessed the day when its votary chanced to straggle under my father's humble roof.

In the course of a year or so, I was taken from school, and, as I have said, entered, a student, with one of the members of your bar, in Columbus. I did not find that my uncommon skull developments set me ahead in the least when I came in contact with the dashy young gentlemen and brilliant ladies of that agreeable place. On the contrary, whenever I went to church, or accepted an invitation to a private house, I felt a degree of awkward-

ness which was extremely unpleasant to one of my modest disposition, especially when contrasted with the high figure I had cut of late years amongst the honest, simple neighbors at home. To tell the truth, sir, I was bound fairly to acknowledge to a friend my perfect *greenness*.

I was sitting quietly one spring morning in my office, poring over a page of old Chitty's Pleading, more than usually fertile in pompous technicalities, when my friend across the passage, who had already been admitted to the practice, entered suddenly, and startled me with asking "*if I had a horse to ride to the fete on Thursday evening.*" As (I found afterwards) this was a Provincialism entirely peculiar to city life (*à la mode*), I did not understand any more what he meant than if he had addressed me in Dutch or Congo. All was, however, presently explained, for he had scarcely asked before a bright, smiling servant-boy tapped at the door, and, inquiring for me by name, thrust before me a nicely-embroidered French basket, filled with what I took to be a number of golden edged notes, all adorned with pretty figures and mottoes. I really thought that it had been the intention of some one to make me a general delivery agent, and under this impression ordered the servant to empty the contents in a large pine box under the table. A broad stare was all the answer he gave, and, had not my friend broken into a loud laugh, I believe I should have given the fellow a buffet on the head for his impudent looks; but, on glancing accidentally in the basket, and seeing my name on the back of one of his notes, it all at once occurred to me that it might be a party ticket. It proved to be such, for, on opening the envelop, a little

bit of a nice sheet of paper dropped out, inside of which was the following:—

"Mrs. Blanche Lyttleton, at home on Thursday evening, May 23, 184—"

Away off in one corner, I observed the word "dancing" in brackets, which I did not exactly understand, and resolving to ask immediate explanation of my friend, I dismissed the servant with a message (and my thanks) to his mistress, to the effect that I would be there if well.

I could neither make out the sense of being "at home" without saying whether she was going to give a tea-party or what, nor why Mr. Lyttleton did not join in the business. But when my friend restrained his mirth sufficiently to unravel these mysteries to me, and I was informed that such was the *fashionable* way of asking to parties, I saw through the whole matter at once, and was fairly charmed with the account he gave of this fine lady and her parties. No one could make up so many nice eatables! no one had such elegant wines! and no one could bring together so many pretty girls, or have such merry dances, as Mrs. Blanche Lyttleton! I saw, already, whole mountains of snow-white cakes, and my mouth was fairly overflowed with water at the thoughts of that sparkling liquor; whilst kindling fancy pictured some lovely damsel, blazing in lace and jewelry, already smitten with my fine appearance, for I was universally conceded to be the crack dancer in my own village of Blackstoneville. A warm glow spread over my whole body as those rapturous and inspiring pictures floated through my mind; and as it was only a night and day to the time appointed, I resolved to live sparingly in diet, so that I might be in

proper trim for the splendid feast I so anxiously anticipated.

Filled with these booming thoughts, and taking no little consequence to myself in having so engaged the attention of this fine lady as to be thought worthy of an invitation, I began to wash and dress on the evening in question full two hours before sunset, fearing that I might be too late for the first table. I completed my toilet just at clever dusk, and, thinking it high time to be off, I left my room and took the direction of Mr. Lyttleton's house. When I got there, I was somewhat taken aback at not seeing a solitary light on the lower floors, nor any signs of bustle or of company anywhere about. I passed on beyond the gate, and, happening to look over into the yard, I saw the same sprightly fellow who had brought me the ticket walking briskly from the kitchen to the house, with a large waiter filled with heaps of the nicest and whitest cake I ever beheld. This again took me aback in a different way, for my heart quaked with the fear that supper was going on, and that I had, at last, overstaid the time. So I halloed to the negro, and inquired if the party had commenced, and whether all the people had come. The fellow made no positive reply, but with a polite duck of the head asked me to walk into the gallery and take a seat.

I had been seated only a few moments when, to my utter surprise, Mr. Lyttleton himself entered the gate in his every-day clothes, evidently just from his office up town, and seeming to be occupied with anything else than thoughts of a tea-party. I thought he started slightly on observing me snugly seated in his gallery; but, as he was among the politest men I ever knew, he

soon recovered, and expressed the greatest degree of pleasure at seeing me, begging that I would excuse him for a few moments, as he would soon be dressed. Now, as we had been accustomed at Blackstoneville always to gather at parties at least by sunset, you may well imagine that I felt somewhat queer and dubious to find the gentleman of the house coming home at this late hour to dress. Still, there was no remedy but to sit still, with eyes wide open, and observe the course of things; and thus, sir, I sat for one long hour after another, wondering and impatient enough, until at last I heard the nine o'clock bell ring. Just then a large flashy carriage drove up before the gate, and Mr. Lyttleton (who had been politely sitting with me the last hour and a half) walked out to meet those who were about to alight from it. To my surprise, however, only a single lady was inside, and, as she swept into the house, I caught sight of the prettiest blue eyes I ever beheld, and heard her laughingly tell Mr. Lyttleton that she had hurried off rather *early*, so as to get there in time to help Mrs. Lyttleton prepare for the reception of the company! My God, sir, I was positively shocked! Here was a lady, arrived after usual bedtime, apologizing for having come so soon, and I, hapless mortal, had been quietly waiting for the party ever since clever dusk! This, thought I, would set all Blackstoneville in a blaze of wonder—getting together to dance and frolic after the finest part of the night was gone.

In less than fifteen minutes after this, at least fifty carriages had come up, filled with ladies and gentlemen, whilst there was no end to those who came afoot, though these were pretty much all gentlemen. I still kept my

seat at the side of the door, and had a fair chance to see every lady as she passed in, for there was the brightest sort of a lamp swung up just in the centre of the passage inside. As yet, I had not caught a glimpse of Mrs. Blanche Lyttleton, for neither she nor her husband, to my utter astonishment, stood at the door to receive the company. Only two servants were there, one of whom took the hats, and the other, a tidy-looking yellow girl, conducted the ladies through to a different part of the house. In a few minutes, however, both parlors and the passage were crowded, and I never in my life heard such a buzzing and fussing. At Blackstoneville, we always sat pretty silent until "Grind the bottle," or "Sister Phœbe one" was proposed, and it was only after we played both of these that dancing began.

At the end of an hour or so, Mr. Lyttleton, observing that I was too modest to move about much where I knew so few, came up and insisted that I should go with him into one of the saloons, and be introduced to the ladies. I of course did not decline the obliging offer, especially as I had taken so much pains to rig myself out for the occasion. One thing, however, caused me to misgive a little. Thinking it was to be a regular dancing affair, I had, according to our way at Blackstoneville, fixed up for the very purpose, and had bought a nice limber pair of Morocco pumps and silk stockings, in order to have the free use of my feet. I had also made my washerwoman do up my favorite ruffle shirt (which used to catch the eye of all our village girls), and had brought the safety-chain of my watch gracefully over the plaits confined by a neat breastpin. But when I entered the room, I saw that every gentleman present had on high-heeled boots

just the same as if they had been going to church, and instead of ruffles most of their waistcoats buttoned up halfway to the cravat. I could not but notice all this, and felt that I was rather awkwardly situated, for my feet especially would be seen to attract universal attention with such a contrast against them. I was tolerably proud, however, and felt my own importance rather too much to allow such a matter seriously to disturb me, and so swung through the crowd with quite an air. Presently we stopped in front of a sweet-looking lady (the same I had seen arrive first), seated on a something I could not see—for her frock covered up the whole concern—and Mr. Lyttleton introduced me as his young friend to Miss Russell, who welcomed me with one of the prettiest smiles that ever dimpled a woman's cheek. One or two gentlemen were standing before her when my introduction took place; but they soon managed to glide softly away, and in a few moments, rather to my confusion, I found myself standing in the middle of a large room filled with fine ladies, face to face with one whose every glance went plunge through me, and no one else near, and most everybody else seated. I gave one startled look around, and then my eyes fell. Every eye, I made sure, was now fixed on my feet, with their pumps and silk stockings shockingly exposed to a sweeping view on all sides. I contrived to stuff away my starched ruffles so as almost to hide them; and then, to keep my hands from dangling and fidgeting about, I gathered hold of my safety-chain, and twirled the watch-key on it around and around at a furious rate. How I longed, for the moment, to be at my own Blackstoneville, leading down the merry country

dance with romping Ecsy Sims or Patsy Callihan, the admired on all hands, the very lion of the night!

I was partially relieved in a short time by hearing all at once the inspiring sound of violins in an adjoining room, and this easily explained the cause of the sudden evacuation by the younger couples of the one in which I had been left. Miss Russell bounced up from the stool she was sitting on in a trice, and then, throwing her arm through mine with a touch of her soft hand that almost made me swoon with ecstasy, proposed that we should go and join the dancers. I had many a time, sir, playfully handled our girls at Blackstoneville, and they had given me many a sly, substantial squeeze; but I never shivered before like I did whilst that warm, snow-white arm, shining with little jeweled belts, rested in mine. Sometimes the touch was so very slight as scarcely to be felt at all; and then, again, she could manage, the prettiest in the world, to press down the whole weight on mine in such a way that I really feared my nerves would jar me to death. And once, when a parcel of gentlemen were rudely crowding past, as she grazed my shoulder with a touch of her own, all naked smartly below the joint, a fit of perfect blindness came over my eyes, and I involuntarily grasped her hand to keep from sinking. This had nearly finished me right away, for my fingers, no matter how, once clutched around that soft and glowing piece of flesh, I could no more unclasp them of myself than could one, unaided, release his hold from the handles of a heavily-charged galvanic machine. Good Lord—thought I, sighing—there never was, and never can be, anything in Blackstoneville to hold even a light to such as this! To tell the truth, sir, I was begin-

ning to bless myself at being in high life, and to thank Mrs. Blanche Lyttleton for her ticket from the very bottom of my heart. I forgot all about the pumps, the silk stockings, and the stiff ruffles in my bosom.

When I came to my proper senses again, I found that the sweet creature had gently and unconsciously to me disengaged her hand, and that we were standing face to face with another couple across the way, with two others paired off on each side, forming what I heard them call a cotillion. I was perfectly riddled with these arrangements, for we had never danced any outlandish dances at Blackstoneville.

But when I heard the fiddlers strike up, with a measure and time wholly unknown to me in dancing, and one of them exclaim, at the top of his voice, something about balancing A, and swinging corners, and forwarding two, and then crossing over to leave your partner, and then again forwarding three, and forwarding one, and *shassay*, and promenade—I was perfectly done up. My bewilderment was complete when the charming creature by my side whispered that they were going to dance the "prisoner." Notwithstanding all this, however, I determined to put on a proper face, and so demean myself in the dancing part as to make full amends for any ignorance of the figure. But when the first couple began to move to the music, I was astonished to see both ladies and gentlemen merely slip and slide about as if they were afraid of a fall. I thought, however, that this might be only their way of getting ready for the high flourishes. At any rate, I felt that I could beat such bending and twisting as that all hollow, and began to pique myself on having so lovely a partner to witness my accomplishments

and agility. But one thing bothered me excessively. I did not know how to do the swinging, or *shassaying* (as they called it), or balancing; and I was totally at a loss how to accommodate myself to the time of the tune, or tunes—for they kept changing them about at every step. However, I made out very well until, on crossing over once with my partner, she was suddenly seized and detained by the gentleman opposite, leaving me standing in my place all alone. But presently they all three, in a bunch, came sailing and slipping over to me in high glee, my partner both times smiling most alluringly at me as she came up. It suddenly occurred to me now that, as she was there a prisoner, the gist of the figure was to make a full grab for her as she neared me, and wrest her from captivity. I accordingly prepared to do as much, when, to my utter consternation, the fiddler sung out "*forward one!*" Several times, during the progress of the dance, I thought I had detected a half smile playing over the mouth of one or two in the cotillion; and now, as I stood staring for a moment, not knowing exactly what to do (for I was the first who had been called on to go it alone), my suspicions were verified. This determined me to make a venture, and to change their mirth into envy by a display of skill which, I felt sure, from the specimens of dancing I had witnessed, would properly surprise them. So, with a nimble skip to the right, I cut the flying pigeon wing at the height of full half a foot from the floor; and then, bounding over to the left with a single spring, struck off the double shuffle at a rate which would have distanced the best jig time. I had intended to go around the whole circle, before stopping to get my partner, with my favorite step of hoeing the corn, but I was suddenly

arrested in mid career in a manner which soon brought the stinging blushes to my face. These extra and unexpected capers of mine (for so I learn all genuine dancing is denominated now-a-days) had been too much even for the amiable and truly polished company before whom I was performing; and as I paused in the double shuffle, to change step, the music suddenly and sharply ceased, and all around, fiddlers, as well as others, seemed convulsed with uncontrollable laughter—in which, despite my mortification, I was obliged to join. All passed off good-humoredly. There was nothing offensive or unbecoming in the mirth, for, among those who had come in from the other rooms to look at the dance, was the grave and dignified gentleman in whose office I was reading, and whose portly sides were shaking with laughter at my expense.

This closed my experiments, as you may well imagine, sir, in the dancing line, at least among the *élite*. I found that character and reputation in one place were by no means a sure passport in another. The skill and agility which would have set the head of every man and woman in Blackstoneville all agog with wonder and envy produced here the most poignant and mortifying ridicule.

After dancing a hundred different other figures, pretty much after the same fashion of the first, Miss Russell, who declined all other solicitation, on purpose to give me the pleasure of waiting on her, managed to inform me that the couples were making way to the supper room, and that I must accompany her. I did not require a second hint, for by this time, it being full one o'clock in the morning, my appetite was properly whetted, having tasted nothing since an early breakfast on purpose that I might enjoy the party supper. Indeed, I had been in

despair for an hour or two, or more, fearing that we were to have nothing more substantial than the cake and wine and lemonade which had been several times handed around in the course of the evening, though I had relished them even not a little. But we had scarcely now cleared the dancing room before my smell was charmed with most delicious scents of turkeys, and salads, and savory old bacon, and a variety of other eatables, easily distinguishable by their fragrant odors, all which caused my tongue fairly to swim inside of the mouth, and created an eagerness to press forward which I could hardly control. So keen had my long fast made me to take hold, that I was almost insensible to the touch of that same sweet arm which still rested in mine; and although in the crowd the lovely creature was pressed once or twice full tilt against me, the gnawings of an empty stomach aided me this time in resisting the enchantment, and deadened every sense save that of the most longing appetite.

The sight which greeted my eyes on entering more than equaled the expectations created by the luscious heraldry of fragrance which had floated through the passage. In the midst of lofty mounds and pyramids of cakes, were seen large bowls of saffron-colored custard, with snowy flakes floating on top, with whole hosts of odorous strawberries scattered around, and at regular distances silver baskets, filled with oranges and bananas, and other fruits; whilst at every pace or two decanters of sparkling wine sent forth their delicious flavor. There was no end to the plates of snow-balls, and hearts, and sweet wafers, and candies; and, thickly interstrewed, there were tempting piles of sliced pineapple, filling the whole room with

their enticing fragrance. "Jewhillikin!" thought I, surveying this bounteous and beautiful display, "this is a long trot ahead of anything ever seen in Blackstoneville, and Mrs. Blanche Lyttleton trips up Ecsy and Patty in short order!" I would have given something more than a trifle if the poor girls could have been present, though I verily believe, sir, it would have run them crazy.

But the cream of the supper had not yet been shown. As soon as the company was pretty well arranged all up and down the tables, I saw the servants lift off the tops from several large tureens on a side table, and a savory steam immediately circulated through the room which fairly ravished me, and I could hardly contain myself within decent bounds of behavior. My fair partner brought me to myself by smilingly desiring me to bring her a plate of *gumbo*, and as this request exactly hit my own taste, I set off at a rapid pace to obey her. I made my way through the crowd, gathered a couple of plates, had them filled in a trice of time, and, returning at full speed, presented one mess to my partner, and, had it been the last act of my life, I had been obliged to dispatch the other.

In short, not to worry you with a fuller account of the progress we made at the supper table, I will just say that between the meats and the cakes I took a full revenge for my intolerably long fast. Among those who officiated at the gumbo tables, I had noticed a stiff and stately lady, whose studied politeness and bland manners caused me to pay my obeisance to her as the hostess, for she was just the sort of personage I had imagined the famous Mrs. Blanche Lyttleton to be. But I was much mistaken. On leaving the supper room, we encountered, in

the passage, a group of several gentlemen engaged in lively conversation with a sprightly, fair-haired, bright-eyed lady, dressed with singular taste and neatness, but rather below the medium height, whose clear, merry laugh rang in my ear like music. I was struck with her vivacity and graceful manner of conversation, and was never more agreeably surprised in my life than when Miss Russell stopped and introduced me to her as Mrs. Blanche Lyttleton. She welcomed me very prettily, and said she was pleased to see me there. "Pleased!" I repeated; "excellent lady"—thought I—"she cannot be better pleased than I am."

I began to catch the hang of everything wonderfully well as the evening closed and morning advanced, and regretted that the party could not last all night. But, worst of all, Mr. Rambler, I hated to part with the lovely and beautiful creature who had guided me through the whole affair, and so kindly borne with all my rustic awkwardness. I wondered if all fine ladies could be like Miss Russell and Mrs. Blanche Lyttleton! "Ah!" thought I, "if they were, how much more ought their amiability of heart to be envied and patterned than to be exciting groveling and low jealousy among women of less exalted station."

True politeness is the test of really fine people. Here was I, a poor, obscure country lad, who had committed several ludicrous blunders, and been guilty of some actual indelicacies unconsciously; and yet not the slightest neglect was offered me, and I received as much attention as the finest gentleman present. To make a long story short, sir, I have now been a lawyer several years in my native village of Blackstoneville, enjoying a mo-

derate practice, and happily married long since. But I must say that I have never since been to quite so nice a party as Mrs. Blanche Lyttleton's; and (asking Mrs. Coke's pardon) have never met with a lovelier lady than Miss Russell.

Yours, most respectfully,

MANSFIELD COKE.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OLD NEGRESS AND HER SON.

This sketch, my dear S——, cannot strictly be confined in its application and consequences to Columbus or its vicinity, although the circumstances may have transpired, many years ago, within its limits; and then, again, they may have dated elsewhere. Be this as it may, they happened whilst yet I was a youth, and the impressions made on my mind from having witnessed them were not only stamped thereon with all the force which such occurrences make usually on susceptible natures at that golden period of life, but are likely to retain their hold till my dying day.

The facts of the case may be briefly stated. A wealthy planter, whose pecuniary circumstances were partially embarrassed, sickened suddenly, and died within a few hours after being attacked. He left no wife, and his children were scarcely more than infants. The landed estate was not sufficient, even at the most favorable prices, to liquidate the debts of the deceased, and it was found necessary to sell a portion of his slaves. This species of property was then at a high value, and the executors deemed it a good opportunity to dispose of all the slaves left by the testator, with a view to lessen the risks and increase the estate of the minors. Accordingly, an order of court was obtained to sell all or what portion they

chose, and an advertisement was posted to that effect, and rapidly circulated. As usual on all such occasions, a large number of buyers congregated on the day of sale, some desirous of purchasing men only, some women, some again young boys, and others young girls. All were anxious to avoid the encumbrance and risk of small children. Under these circumstances, and the affair having gone too far to be mended or reconsidered, no course consistent with the pecuniary interests of the minors was left, save to sell separately, each one by turn, without regard to husband or wife, parent or child, excepting only the tenderest aged infants at the mother's breast. It happened to me, my dear sir, to be present, though not as a purchaser, for I was then a minor myself.

I recognized most of those who were huddled, in melancholy groups, beneath the relentless hammer of the salesman. There were the faces of old, faithful servitors of the deceased, the patriarchs of his quarters, the companions of his early life, the fast and truest friends of those whom he had left behind. Around them were wives and children, and grand-children, and connections of every degree—all about to be parted, and awaiting the stroke which was to consign them, perhaps, to a hundred different masters. Their thoughts would seem sometimes to wander to the past, when all lived happily together in their smiling cabins, under one kind owner, in whose family all had been raised—and a heavy sigh or glistening tear would involuntarily attest the mournful welcome of the recollection. Then, again, they became abstracted, apparently, with conjectures of the gloomy and chilling future, arrayed in tenfold horrors to them who had never felt the weight of servitude as it is, some-

times, unfortunately felt; and now and then, as an inquisitive and keen-eyed speculator would fix his gaze on them, I could see the ill-disguised palpitation of heart, the convulsive tremor of voice, as they responded to his various questions. Their countenances were shrouded in deep melancholy, and their spiritless eyes and sluggish attitudes told full well the tale of their fears and apprehensions. I could not but call to mind, as I beheld them there, the joyous scenes of many a harvest night in bygone years, when I had seen those same eyes sparkle with the light of simple jovialty as one of the number would mount the lofty corn-pile and trill forth the rustic song; and I felt the full glow of sympathy, as imagination would bring freshly and almost sensibly to my ears the deep-toned melody of the wild chorus which would go sounding over hill and plain, and echoing in harmonious cadences, through wood and vale, miles off, as each merry soul chanted his response to the leader. The glowing spirits, and harmless, mirthful revels of their happy Christmas holidays—that time of festival and gaiety which, amongst this unfortunate people, lightens all the burdens, and compensates for all the privations of whole years of hard labor, and which is, emphatically, the grand gala-day of their lives—all these floated over my memory as I looked now on those fallen eyes, and dull attitudes, and I gave way unconsciously to gloomy and overpowering revery. Ah, happy, thrice happy days of childhood! when the sorrows of the past, and the fears of the future, are alike shut out from reflection; when the present beams with smiles; when everything looks bright; and when that world whose all of happiness is found in after life to consist either in grateful associations

of the past, or buoyant hopes of the future, seems too charming and too full of delights ever to be soiled with prints of sorrow, or clad with that deceptive garniture which transforms the loveliest of its visions, and which tempts man to encounter its chilling realities!

Conspicuous among the number assembled on that melancholy day was an old negress, of a bright mulatto complexion, whose merry-looking face had been familiar to me for many years, and who was known by all who were connected with the family of the dead master to have been an especial favorite—favored for the warmth and depth of her devotion to him and to his little children. I had often, when a small boy, visited her neat and cheerful hut, and shared, with genuine pleasure, her rude and primitive-like hospitality. Coarse and homely as they were, I shall always remember the repasts of fried eggs, and ash-cakes, and nicely broiled young chickens, with which she rarely failed to treat me on the occasions of these visits. She lived on a portion of the farm through which glided the lovely brook in whose limpid waters it was my custom to angle of Saturdays, or late of summer evenings, when the old field school I attended was dismissed; and her humble cot had often sheltered me from a sudden shower, and witnessed many a mirthful romp with the lively sister of her young master (then himself under the paternal roof), whom I there often used to surprise. Poor old Nanny! how changed was the scene now—how sadly changed! I have lived to taste of much of what is called the world's pleasures since. I have dined with the great, the wealthy, the fashionable, often; yet, from amidst all these, I can recall now no fond scene half so welcome, or half so grateful,

as those charming sylvan scenes in the hut of that poor old negress!

But happy though she had been in possessing a kind master; indulged as she was in all her tasks, and rejoicing in the simple pleasures of her negro lot, Nanny's had been a life of domestic sorrows. She had raised a family of fine boys and girls to see them snatched away, one after an other, by a relentless fever, and the burial-ground of the farm was filled with the mouldering objects of her best and strongest affections; for a *master* only can know how strong a negro mother *can* love her offspring. At length she had lived to see the husband of her youth, to whom she had clung through a long life of connubial union with a fidelity to be admired even in higher spheres, carried to the same lonely resting-place; and she was left with only one little boy, the gift of their old age, the solace of her declining years. He was then just beginning to run about, and playfully aid his old mother in driving up the young fowls as night came on; and, slave though she was, and born to privation and labor, I could not but experience an emotion of the purest attachment for both as I watched the gleaming eye of the mother as it followed the sprightly little fellow in his gambols. He was allowed to remain with her long after the time when planters usually call their hardy young slaves to the field. The last time I had seen him was on a Christmas morning, several years afterwards, when he came over to the *great house* (as southern negroes call the master's mansion), with his mother, to bid good health to master and mistress, and endeavor to catch them, or some of the family, in a *Christmas gift*. Few of us who own slaves, as you very well know, my dear S——, ever refuse to

grant this innocent and appropriate indulgence to these creatures of our will; and I remember well paying the penalty to old Nanny and her little Joe, on the morning in question, as I happened then to be spending the holy-days with her master. After breakfast, I proposed that we should take a leisure stroll, for remembrance sake, over the old tramping-grounds of other days; and, meeting with a ready and cheerful assent, we sallied forth by the same old path, over the same substantial stiles, through the same fields and meadows where I had so often rambled of yore. In this excursion, we were followed by bevies of little black urchins, clad in their Christmas vestments (which were purchased during the year from the neighbors' children, for partridge eggs and young squirrels), and showing rows of the whitest ivory as they trotted along behind, rejoicing in the festive occasion. I need not mention that my friend, little Joe, was a prominent personage in this sable throng; for, in fact, it had been his presence, in company with his old mother, that had suggested to me the idea of the ramble, strange as the fact may appear to many who shall read this sketch. We came first to the old moss-covered spring, bursting up boldly at the head of a lovely little glen, in the midst of tall poplars and overhanging shrubbery, and pouring its silver-colored, rippling stream into the large brook which ran not far off. Within its rock-lined basin, I had often, in past days, when an inmate under the hospitable roof of the former master, dipped and cooled the watermelon, freshly gathered from the field adjoining, to fit it for a noontide repast; and from which, also, I had seen the dairy-woman draw many a bottle of ice-cold milk for the sultry summer night's meal.

Passing on, we ascended, at a buoyant pace, to the brow of the rather lofty hill beyond, from which could be seen the old family mansion, in the midst of its tall oaks and graceful China trees, with its hedges of lilac and eglantine stretching along by the garden, and up the long lane in front—a picture I had loved in other days to behold, when, early of a spring morning, I accompanied the hardy sons of the fine old planter on our Saturday angling excursions. From this point we wound along through a beautiful wood, passing many a venerable oak or chestnut, from whose boughs my gun had often tumbled a hapless little squirrel, until we came in sight of the lovely meadow on the other side, and through which glided, like a thread of glowing silver, the stout brook which watered the plantation.

As this fine and well-remembered scene opened before me once again, teeming with fond associations of past time, and glowing with many a loved passage of those guileless days, I involuntarily called to mind those beautiful lines in Sir Walter Scott's Marmion, and felt the full impulse of poetry which inspired them :—

"Thus, while I ape the measure wild
Of tales that charmed me yet a child,
Rude though they be, still with the chime,
Return the thoughts of early time;
And feelings, roused in life's first day,
Glow in the line, and prompt the lay.
Then rise those crags, that mountain tower,
Which charmed my fancy's wakening hour.
Though no broad river swept along
To claim, perchance, heroic song;
Though sighed no groves in summer gale,
To prompt of love, a softer tale;

Though scarce a puny streamlet's speed
Claimed homage from a shepherd's rod,
Yet was poetic impulse given
By the green hill, and clear blue heaven:
Still, with vain fondness, could I trace,
Anew, each kind, familiar face,
That brightened at our evening fire;
From the *old* mansion's gray-haired sire—
——To him, the venerable *priest*,
Our frequent and familiar guest,
Whose life and manners well could paint
Alike the *student* and the saint."

Following the course of the stream (it could not, my dear S——, be really called "*puny*"), we came at length to the margin of the old pond, dotted with huge rocks here and there, which had been placed originally in the water, with a view to constructing some sort of machinery, and over whose greenish heads the currrent had roared and dashed for many a long year. Here I had often pulled out scores of young catfish, and horny-heads, and pink-bellied perch; and here, too, amidst the babbling waterfall and moss-embowered scenery, had indulged many and many a wild day-dream of boyish love and ambition. With the ardent fancy of youth, I had often seen the bright face of my fair-haired lassie in the watery mirror before me, and heard her voice in the rustling breeze which shook the sweet shrub bushes around; whilst I listened to the roar of the rapid torrent, as it leaped over rock and mound, with a feeling somewhat akin to that which may have inspired the Greek orator as he harangued the wild billows of the Ægean Sea. The thoughts of years crowded on my mind as I stood by this treasured spot, watching the freaks of the little black

boys, with my friend Joe at their head, as they skipped and bounded nimbly from rock to bank, across the babbling stream. It was as pleasant a Christmas revel as I ever enjoyed—this witnessing the sport of a group of unfortunate striplings, filled with nothing but devotion to those who owned them, and whose humble heart-offerings, because of their degraded birth, are far too seldom cultivated by even the kindest masters. Ah! my dear S——, a little familiarity with our own race, as the world goes, will soon convince a master that offerings from this quarter are far more sincere than from those we meet in an equal sphere of society.

Not far from this, as I have elsewhere stated, was the lowly, thatched tenement of my old friend Nanny, and I could not resist the temptation to wander far enough out of the way back to the house to take a farewell look at the familiar old place. The door was locked, and no one was about. A mellow-toned chanticleer mounted, with flapping wings, the top of an old rotten post which supported the gate, and gave a wild, merry crow as we approached; but this was all the welcome we met with, and I proposed at once to return.

Long years succeeded, and rolled away, and (returning from my digression), the next time I saw little Joe, the merry-faced negro boy, was on the day when he first was made acquainted with a heavy heart. He was standing, with his hands clasped, silent and melancholy, beside his weeping mother. He was no longer the light-hearted little urchin of the Christmas morning. The growth of a few years had done wonders, and he had attained to the size of a smart, half-grown boy, though he had not seen more than a dozen summers. His kind master was dead

—his master's orphans were mere children—and there were none to protect him, in this sore hour of trial, from the imperative grasp of the law. His mother was too old, and likely to prove too much of a burden, for any one to care much about buying her; whilst his own sprightly looks and well-shaped limbs were likely to induce lively competition amongst the bidders. I read his thoughts, as though each one had formed a letter, and pitied the poor desponding boy from the bottom of my heart.

It was the most mournful and soul-touching sight I ever beheld—that cheerless, spiritless group! It is usual, at most sales of the character of the one in question, to witness more or less of this apprehension and gloom among the slaves doomed to the block; but I am sure I never saw such a universal display of feeling as I beheld on that day.

The hour arrived—the sheriff ascended the court-house steps, and the sale began. One by one the slaves were brought, and exposed to full view from the block, and knocked off to the highest bidder, and at rates which showed that such property was in brisk demand. The bidders made every effort to allay their humanity, and to nerve themselves to the highest pitch of callousness and indifference. They were not answerable for the sale; it was a dead appeal to self-interest; and the terrified children were thrust forward as the choice fell on them, and bought up separately, without the least regard to the calm imploring looks, and silent tears, and patient endurance of their suffering parents. But pity, in its naked shape, and taken apart from interest, was not wholly wanting. The heart of the Southerner, however, in *this* respect, framed by custom and education, is

never, on such occasions, entirely lost to the touch of sympathy. Whilst all, as was natural, struck eagerly for their interest, and made such selections for purchasing as best suited them, no one sported with the feelings of the distressed. They who directed the sale often stayed a rising tear as some scene of family parting occurred, and the bystanders frequently clubbed to buy in families, in order to gratify their attachments and feelings. It was only when some straggling speculator or distant resident was heard bidding that signs of suffering grew uncontrollable and impressible; and at such moments many a glistening eye was discernible amongst those who attended the sale from mere motives of curiosity, or, perchance, to yield a look of encouragement and sympathy to the despairing victims of the law.

At length I saw the sheriff beckon to Joe. Calmly and tearlessly, he obeyed the summons with an active spring, which seems to have been ventured to destroy his fears. A stifled sob, in his rear, answered the call made for him to ascend the block, and, for a single moment, he paused at that evidence of maternal suffering. I thought his heart would fail him, and looked to see the tears roll from his large, woeful, bright eye; but, at that time, he gave the bound spoken of, and faced the crowd with a look of mingled humility and calmness which nothing seemed likely to disarm. The buyers pressed more closely around the stand as he was offered, for he was one of the likeliest boys of his kind, and a dozen bids simultaneously caught the sheriff's ear. These evidences of competition went like the stroke of death to his mother's heart, and, though affliction had dealt severely with her in former years, the consolation remained that the

children she had buried were gone home to the grand, common master of owner and slave—of bond and free. But now the gift and pet of her old age, in whom all that was left of her early love was devotedly centered, who had never slept a night from under her lowly cot, was doomed to pass an ordeal vastly more trying than death itself to a mother's heart. These harrowing reflections disarmed her of all fortitude, and moans of deep anguish, bursting from the full fountain of maternal tenderness, mingled with the cries of the busy auctioneer, and brought sorrow to many a humane and manly heart. Some, it is true, who had been schooled to regard a negro's nature as next akin to that of the brute, looked with astonishment at these burning evidences of grief, but far the greater part of those present yielded the hapless mother their sincerest sympathy. Several of the old negro men who had been raised up with her, and who had just passed through the same ordeal to which she was now subjected, gathered around her with friendly intent, and strove to comfort her. But it seemed as if the sorrows and trials which had been smothered for years were now weighing her to the earth, aroused by this last "unkindest cut" of all. I never coveted, before or since, my dear S——, a lavish abundance of money; but, at that moment, I felt as if thousands would have been only as a feather in the balance weighed against this acute and overwhelming, not to say irreparable, maternal distress. I have seen our fair-haired mothers bending over the lifeless remains of a darling child about to be consigned to parent dust—I have seen them when afflictions besieged every penetrable avenue to their tender and susceptible hearts; but I never beheld the traces of grief and anguish so deeply furrowed as on

the distorted features of that poor old negro woman when the hammer of the sheriff announced the fate of her only boy. He was purchased by a wealthy planter resident in a distant State, and taken immediately into safe custody by his new master, who, with a mistrust too common amongst slave-dealers, adopted the severe and repulsive precaution of manacling his hands with stout irons forged for the purpose, and then confining him, by means of a strong rope, to the neck of his horse. It is this unwarrantable and useless severity, practiced by such heartless men, whose very severity argues a mistrustful and uneasy conscience, which gives to the enemies of our institution such room for rabid exaggeration, and which renders this feature of it odious even to its best friends. In the transfer of these unfortunate people (unfortunate always when forced to the block), a kind look, a benevolent expression, a single word of encouragement or sympathy, rarely fails to reconcile them in a moment to their altered lot, even when family connections are dissevered; but when severity is called to aid, before even suspicion or bad conduct is aroused, and barbarous precautions used to prevent what the victim has not, perhaps, so much as dreamed of perpetrating, it is only a matter of surprise and of congratulation that we have so few evil-minded and unruly slaves in our midst.

When the sale was closed, I felt impelled to linger on the spot, hoping to fall on some happy plan by which to soothe the approaching separation of this poor negress and her darling boy. A humane and tender-hearted gentleman present on the ground had bought the old woman for very compassion, and promised her every opportunity of going to see her son; but nothing could assuage the

horrors of the separation about to ensue, and nothing could mitigate the dark forebodings and withering misgivings which weighed on her mind in connection with her son's fate and treatment at the hands of one who had begun so roughly. The poor boy, despite all this, held out bravely to the last. He gazed with a look of stupefied horror at the manacles, as the new master forced them over his hands, and then turned, with tearless eyes, to receive the convulsive embrace of his agonized parent. But when, bound and fettered, he was at length rudely commanded to take up his melancholy line of march; when the fond arms in which he had nestled nightly from his earliest infancy, clasped now for the last time around his neck, were forced by friendly hands from their nervous hold, and his aged mother was borne, sorrowing and heart-broken, from the court-yard; when he received the last farewell of those old patriarchs of his native plantation by whom he had been raised, *then* the smothered fires of despair found vent, and the burst of manly grief which followed, and which attested the severity of this first shock on his young heart, thrilled every beholder, and would have convinced the hardiest skeptic that natural affections, though restrained and subdued, are not wholly extinct in the negro's bosom because of his degraded lot.

As an American, my dear S——, I sincerely deplore and deprecate such scenes as I have here described, and thank God that they are of such rare occurrence that they often inspire with disgust every single beholder. As a son of the South, ardently devoted to her interests and institutions, I view them always with shame and abhorrence. They are the more to be deplored and abhorred by all

high-minded and enlightened Southerners because, in connection with our peculiar institutions, they are utterly irremediable by law. They are remediable only by the slower, but at the same time surer, progress of healthy public opinion. However crying and repulsive the *evil* (for evil every enlightened Southerner believes it to be) of selling and transferring slaves as any other species of property, dissevering all their family associations, and destroying all their natural affections, all penal enactments on the subject can result in nothing but its aggravation. Mistaken and misdirected (even though sincere-hearted) philanthropy is ever the most cruel and deplorable policy which unwise and unthinking zealots adopt in connection with ameliorating the condition of slaves.

There are few slaveholders to be found who would not cordially embrace a plan which might so act as an alternative as to do away with this single hateful feature in an institution which otherwise is so cherished by nearly all Southerners. But every evil must have its concomitants, and it is almost, if not quite, impossible to disconnect barter and traffic with a state of absolute slavery. Judicious legislation may perhaps alleviate, indirectly, the evil, but the remedy exists only in enlightened public opinion, and here we must be content to let it rest. Every succeeding generation enters on the theatre of life with increased correctness and liberality of opinion concerning these concomitant evils of the great evil. The lapse of a few more will doubtless bring a most gratifying amelioration in every respect, and perhaps so mollify the unwelcome features of the institution, so alleviate its rigors, as to soften and subdue the asperity of even its most frantic opponents.

A RAMBLER.

N. B. Here, my dear S——, I take leave of you, in my character of the Rambler, and as the especial object of address. If these fugitive sketches shall ever attain publicity, there will be doubtless some curiosity among my readers to solve the enigma of your identity. Many will conjecture that you are merely an ideal creation; others will cast about to find, as they think, the original and real character. One of these *must* be right—which, I shall not say. I can only remind all who are inquisitive on the subject of the celebrated motto of Junius's letters —"stat nominis umbra."

For the future, I shall drop the address, and may take a wider range, and pursue quite a different course. For the present, then, my fair friend, *Vale—benedicite;* may pleasures attend thy hopes, and flowers bloom in thy path!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LEGEND OF BLACK CREEK.

In a secluded portion of this, our fine county of Lowndes, bordering on the banks of the swift-gliding Buttatchie, and several miles distant from the metropolis, is a nice little hamlet, which, whatever may be its designation familiarly, we shall for the present denominate Simstown. The few people who dwell in and around are plain, simple, mostly uneducated, and poor farmers, but famed throughout the county for their sturdy independence and inflexible honesty. Hospitality, too, is another distinguishing trait in their character; and it seems to have been inherited from time immemorial, inasmuch as it comes as natural to them as their religion or love of country, and proceeds from no ostentatious and insincere love of company, or flaunting parade. They, moreover, belong to that rare class of citizens who prefer to attend strictly to their own business and occupations, and to neglect those of other persons in which they have no interest; are seldom seen in town, except during court-week, or when a circus or menagerie is advertised to exhibit; and never take any part in politics further than to vote just as they please, although they never fail to entertain strolling candidates in the most handsome manner; oftentimes get up a barbecue for their especial benefit, and, indeed, become seriously offended unless

these pleasant gentlemen take a regular round through the neighborhood, visiting and staying all night separately at each cottage, which they claim without reference to party or persons. They have their own church, their own school, their own preachers and schoolmasters, and listen as attentively to a Mormon or Millerite as to the most genuine Baptist, or exacting Methodist itinerant. Intolerance is discarded from their principles, and whilst they are inflexible both in their religious and political opinions, a preacher of any denomination or class, like the candidate for office, has only to declare his business to receive a universal welcome.

This seclusion and peculiarity of habit, on the part of these peaceful and contented neighbors, may naturally suggest to the sagacious reader an idea which this sketch is written especially to confirm, viz., that, living as they did, the good people of Simstown must needs be smartly superstitious, and credulous on the subject of goblins and spirits. Indeed, they never pretended to deny their belief in the existence of such things; and every old housewife, and merry plough-lad, and romping piece of a lass, for miles around, could rehearse to the inquisitive listener divers appalling stories of sights they had seen of dark nights, and strange noises they had heard; and occasionally one of the older wights would recount, by his blazing chimney corner, to groups of staring children and terrified women, the wondrous perils and mishaps of some personal adventure of his own with these airy, frolicksome beings of another world. All these stories were caught, and of course spread, with every imaginable exaggeration, by the negroes belonging to the various farmers around; and bending their whole active and magnifying fancies to the

welcome task, these credulous and wonder-loving sons of Africa would charm and excite their masters' children with tales of Jack-o'-the-lanterns, and swamp owls, and whippowils, all of which were, with them, beings of speech and thought. Of the first they were most especially afraid; and when, after the close of their labors on Saturday evenings, and they had received permission to go to their friends' houses, on some adjoining plantation, one of these eccentric phantoms would spring up suddenly, from some damp place or old grave, they would reverently start an opposite course, and quickly turn their coats wrong-side outwards, which, they averred, from long experience and tradition, to be the only protective under such circumstances. If, unluckily, they had left home without a coat, and their path was crossed by one of these exhalations, they fully believed it was their duty to follow its course; and many are the frightful stories they have been heard to tell of the ditches, and slashes, and briar-patches through which the phantom forced them to follow; and here, sometimes, they would take some sort of shape and vanish suddenly up a tree, scaling all the bark off as they climbed, or else disappear in some lake or stream of water, which would boil and bubble for minutes afterwards. In the same way, if, in these night journeys, a large owl would shriek out suddenly a tu-whoo! over their heads, or would begin a peculiar, indescribable sort of cackle, or laugh, these superstitious creatures would take off their hats in an instant, and respond in a pert, merry voice, "Oh yes, master!" just as if addressed by a human being; whereas, the mournful notes of the whippowil never failed to inspire them with thoughts of death, and the first who happened to hear the sounds was uneasy for

days afterwards, for fear that he would lose a wife or child, or perhaps a valued master or mistress, which he generally considered a far greater calamity than the former.

This credulity, and marvel-loving propensity, so generally characteristic of our Southern negroes, may easily explain the early tendencies to superstition among the chivalrous Southerners; and which, even among the most intelligent, often makes impressions which last in full strength for years, and exert some influence through life, although, in mature years, the feeling becomes one rather of pleasant association than of awe. This is the case to a far greater extent among the simple-minded and uneducated classes than among what are called the higher circles of society. With these it becomes, from habit and association, part and parcel of their nature, and no instruction or ridicule can banish the impression from their minds.

Now it happened, that there lived, some years ago, among the people of Simstown, a worthy, ignorant, and industrious soul by the name of Tony Randull, or, as he was familiarly called in the neighborhood, singing Randull. This singular cognomen had been attached to him in consequence of wonderful endowments in the line of religious singing, and the uncommon capacity of his lungs in the exercise of this favorite indulgence. Tony was a strict member of the Methodist Church, and always a conspicuous person at all of the camp-meetings. He was ever a welcome guest at the tents; for, although Tony was never known to be missing from the stand, or from morning-prayer, yet he was a handy fellow at all kinds of out-door work, and never failed to pay for more than he ate or drank at any place where he sojourned during the festival—though surely no tabernacle was ever known

to exact or look for pay on such occasions. The singing before and after service was, with him, the charm of life, and if the spirit was properly stirred up, and revivals began around the rustic altar, Tony looked as if he would go mad with joy and singing, and, as he himself expressed it, "it was just the thing he was cut out for." Indeed, I have heard one or two gray-haired old brethren, who sometimes loved a good joke from the very bottom of their honest hearts, say, with a sneaking smile, that Tony was the main *earthly* agent in working out his own conversion, for that he drowned all other voices in singing whilst the process was going on. He owned no property, had no wife or child, no relations in the State that any one knew of, and followed, for his living, overseeing on a small scale, jobbing about among the farmers, or taking their cattle, or staves, or any produce they might have for sale, to market in town. This last was his ordinary occupation, and as he always needed an assistant in case of a stall, or to mind the team whilst he was hunting buyers for his produce, he always got permission to take along with him an old negro fellow belonging to one of the farmers, who had grown too old for plantation labor, and was, in consequence of this fact, and of having always borne a fine character, the next thing to a free man. Old Ned, or, as Tony used to call him, Uncle Ned, was also a member of the Methodist Church, and was generally regarded by the preachers who travelled the circuit as particularly gifted with grace, and was, in fact, the black patriarch of the settlement, trusted by all, and favored as well as respected, by all. Now Uncle Ned excelled as much in prayer as did Tony in the gift of singing, and for this reason, it is supposed, more than

any other, he was the chosen friend of Tony, and his brother in the Lord; and they have both been often heard to liken themselves unto Jonathan and David, for Tony was a humble, pious man, and thought it not at all beneath him to seek a friend from among this degraded and unfortunate race. As it was a considerable distance to town, these two chosen companions were often benighted in returning home; and frequently, late of a night, long after all had gone to bed, the neighbors would be warned first of their approach by the mellow notes of sacred music, winding, in linked sweetness, through the valley, and then dying in distant echoes over the hills. At all such times, Tony would lead the tune, whilst old Ned chimed in with a strong, peculiar bass of his own, deep and full, and carried in most admirable concert with the highest pitch of his friend's tenor. As it was well known that both solemnly believed, in common with most of the neighborhood, in the existence of ghosts, and all the supernatural tribes, many conjectured that their fears of a visit from some quarter of this kind made them indulge in such lusty, fervent psalmody when they chanced to get overtaken by night. The sequel of the story will probably demonstrate that there was very considerable foundation for this conjecture.

The road which leads, for most of the way at least, from Columbus to Simstown, is that which was cut by Gen. Jackson, in his celebrated march with the Tennessee volunteers and a few regulars from Nashville to the frontiers on the Gulf of Mexico, when an invasion by the British was expected every month. It is known to this day as the military road, and is crossed, about six or seven miles from town, by a large, dark-looking stream,

called, familiarly, Black Creek. It is a forbidding spot, shaded by huge willows and swamp-oaks, whose thick foliage imparts an aspect of gloom and terror sufficiently ominous to put a suspicious or superstitious soul on his guard, independent even of the ghostly associations connected with its history. To pass this place, so generally thought to be haunted, was always a sore trial, especially after dusk, to singing Randull and his old negro companion, for they verily believed all the stories they had ever heard about the awful deeds which had been committed within its dark shadows, as well as the fact of its being oftentimes the scene of unearthly and abominable revels indulged by the wicked, wandering spirits, who had not yet been dead long enough to be confined. Here, it was said, a young Choctaw Indian, the son of a powerful chief, had slain his brother in a fit of anger, and then thrown his body, tied to a large bundle of stones, in the deep gulf or basin formed by a sudden sink in the channel of the creek, just on the margin of the road. An aged Tennesseean, who died in the county many years ago, and who had been a soldier in the army of General Jackson, often told a story of how Old Hickory, having arrived on the banks during a tremendous freshet, and being impatient to get along, rashly ordered two young dragoons to try the depth of the ford, and how both of them were swept away by the swift current, and never seen more. Added to these was the melancholy fact, too well known, that one or two persons had been unfortunately drowned, of late years, in the attempt to cross at the same place where the creek was too much swollen.

But that which, more than all other circumstances, had contributed to give a bloody celebrity to this fatal spot,

was one which had transpired only about two years previously to the date of this legend, and therefore ten times more awful, apart from its horrid details, than all the rest put together. Everybody hereabouts will easily recollect the whole matter, and I only recount it here for the benefit of those readers who live at different places.

Let it be known, then, that, at this place, in the spring of 183–, was inhumanly and savagely murdered an old traveller, who was supposed to be on his way to Columbus for the purpose of buying and entering government lands. He was riding calmly along, some hour after night, not dreaming of any danger, but whistling to make up for thought, when a savage assassin flew on him from the adjoining thicket, and mercilessly shot him through the heart. The old gentleman fell heavily from his horse, and the murderer, wresting and seizing the bridle in an instant, possessed himself of the traveler's saddle-bags, and then galloped furiously off on his own horse, which had been tied on the brow of the hill. All these facts were given by two men who were riding down the slope on the opposite side; but no one knew either of the parties, and after an inquest, which amounted, like most inquests, to just nothing at all, the murdered man was buried decently on the side of the road, where, for aught that I have heard to the contrary, he reposes quietly to this day. The assassin was not discovered and brought to justice until long years after, when, according to the old saying that "murder will out," the news reached Columbus that he had at last been identified, condemned, and executed in a distant State; for another crime, however, than the one in question. But if the stories in vogue about Simstown are to be credited, the grave does not

confine him very closely, and he is still allowed to wander to the scene of his most flagitious crime. It is there currently stated by an old black man that he returns and acts his murder over in the same way, and on the very same spot, every anniversary of the event. His story is that, as he was returning home one night, and just as he had got fairly within the shades of the swamp, he first heard the sound of a horse's hoof moving, as it seemed, to the time of a slow tune which the rider was whistling. Presently the flash of a pistol lighted up the scene, the rider dropped from his horse, a man rushed out and rifled him in a trice, and then, mounting a huge black horse, which stood a little way off, breathing fire and flames from his nostrils, both vanished in a whirlwind which happened to meet them just at the top of the hill. At the same time, a star fell and burst right before his eyes, and blinded him for several minutes; after which, he could see nothing of the murdered man or his beast. As if it had been really intended to frighten him to death, he declares he also beheld two men on horseback, with plumes in their caps, and great crooked swords dangling at their sides, rearing and plunging through the air about the height that the creek usually rises to in high flood, whilst a great white figure darted up suddenly, with a shriek, out of the dark pool, and then fell back heavily again, as if pulled down with a dead weight.

This wild story spread with the rapidity of lightning all around and through the neighborhood of Simstown, and caused many a bold lad and tom-boy girl to open wide their eyes with wonder, whilst the old people reverently shook their gray heads. It sank deep into the susceptible hearts of singing Randull and his old black

companion, upsetting what sneaking doubts they may have ever entertained, and clothing with a terrible reality the fearful misgivings they had always cherished in connection with the blood-stained spot. They never passed the ford even in broad daylight, with the bright sun shining gayly on every side, without muttering a low prayer for protection against evil spirits, or casting a furtive, suspicious glance through the bushy clusters which lined the roadside. They also had made a solemn vow never to permit their mules, under any circumstances, to quench their thirst in the polluted waters of the gulf where the Indian fratricide, like another wicked Cain, had endeavored to hide the evidence of his hell-deserving crime. If, accidentally, the wind made a whistle in passing through some crevice of the wagon body, their blood would begin to run cold for fear that it might be the old traveler's dying notes; and if the branch of a tree happened to creak sharply as they passed, their blood would then fairly freeze in their veins as the idea suggested itself that it might be the clank of the swords belonging to the two unfortunate dragoons; whilst for dread of seeing the spirit of the dead Indian, they would put whip to their beasts, and ascend the hill in the briskest sort of a trot. But it was when they were doomed to pass the fatal place after nightfall that their fears reached the crowning point. It was at such hour that they dreaded most a conflict with Satan and his wild legions, especially too on ground abominable in the sight of every good Christian. At such times, they would join in raising a psalm some half a mile or so before coming in sight of the gloomy dell, in hopes thereby to get the spirit of grace fully up in time for the

dreaded contest; and in this way they had thus far been enabled to pass through the swamp safely and sound.

Few men, however, are permitted to slip quietly through life without encountering or provoking ill-will from some quarter or other; and singing Randull, harmless and inoffensive as was his mode of getting along, had yet unconsciously raised up an enemy who at last fell upon an expedient which revenged him horribly and effectually. There lived at that time (not in Simstown, but) in the neighborhood, a roaring, rattle-brained, rumpussing character of a fellow—the very counterpart of Brom Bones—by the name of Bob Bagshot, whose greatest delight was, at the head of his gang, to keep the country, for miles around, in a constant stew for fear of his frolics or pranks, but who nevertheless managed to keep on the good side of everybody, and performed, in his sober moments, more acts of genuine charity and benevolence than any pious professor in the whole circuit of his wild domain. Among the women especially Bob was highly esteemed; for woe to that hapless husband whose cruel or harsh treatment of his wife reached the ears of Bob Bagshot or any of his helter-skelter followers! He was sure, in such instances, to visit on the offender the most degrading punishment, and he might justly consider himself a most fortunate man who escaped a ride on the edge of a sharp rail, or a distressing ducking in some convenient goose-pond. At the same time, he was one of the kindest neighbors in the world, and never hesitated to help a friend out of any sort of difficulty. If one got deep in the grass when his crop was growing, Bob took his own hands and worked him out. Or, if the constable pounced down suddenly on another, and security would answer

the purpose (Bob never kept any money, and had no use for it), the same ready hand was always by to write a responsible name.

But Bob, maugre all his innocent wildness, and sincere benevolence of character, had his failings (as who has not?); but they were emphatically failings of the *heart*, not of the head. Bob had a most luscious eye, and loved a tidy, bright-eyed wench better than all things else, although everybody knew that he was not a marrying man. If ever he staid all night at a farm-house (as he very often did), the good dame would hunt up her romps at bedtime, and lock them securely in their room, pretty much in the same way that an old hen gathers her young brood beneath her wings when a greedy robber of a hawk is seen flying suspiciously overhead. But she must have been a sharp-witted woman who could outgeneral Bob at any game of this description; for, after all, it was ten chances to one if he was not seen returning betimes the next morning from the cow-pen, in loving gossipry with the milkmaid, whose flushed cheeks, and ruddy lips, and sheepish glances of the eye carried sad convictions to the mother's heart, whilst the old farmer himself would dart a half scowl on the pair with a deep sigh, which told plainly enough that he suspected more than he chose to express.

Bob was the head man at all the bran dances of the hamlet, and of the neighborhood around, was foremost in all the fishing and seining parties, and took the lead, by common consent, in every hunting expedition against deer and bear, or wolves and foxes. He could wind the clearest and fullest blast with a horn of any man in the country; and of a fine frosty morning, ere yet the

sun rose, one note from his well-known, mellow-toned horn was the signal for a general gathering among all the hardy lovers of sport for miles around. He had a signal note for each description of chase. If he was for a deer-scouring, one sharp, shrill, high-keyed blast was sufficient intimation for each man to seek out the stands, and everything went on as well as if they had met and planned the part of every one. If he was after wolf, the note was measured and prolonged, swelling louder and louder as it mingled with the morning breeze, denoting that the chase was one which required vigilance and perseverance; for this animal takes always a wide circuit, and is rarely brought to the death under four or five hours, and frequently seven or eight. If, again, he desired to jump a fox, the medley of peals fell in such rapid succession from the horn that the air was kept busy enough in transporting the sounds disconnectedly, whilst they infused double quick motion into all whom he had surprised in bed, and who threw on any clothes they could find or lay hands on, any sort of fashion, and sometimes in no fashion at all, especially if they wished to be present when the dogs first started in cover. But it was when black cuffy was the destined victim, that he showed his true and exquisite command over the tones of his horn. This time the blast was varied every second, and in less than half a minute the whole gamut would be gone through with astonishing precision; showing that cuffy had a great many ways, and was a sly old fellow, and that all who pursued him must keep every eye open. His hounds, too, understood and comprehended the meaning of these different keys as well as the best huntsman; and it was as much as any of their

skins were worth if a false scent was struck after his intentions had been thus professionally announced.

Bob's musical accomplishments did not stop here, and were by no means confined to his performances on the horn. He was given up to be the best fiddler in the whole country, and could turn off a reel in the merriest and prettiest time in the world, with the most graceful ease imaginable, and with a melody so exciting and inspiring that the stiffest limbs would imbibe elasticity under the influence of his touches, whilst the active dancers were all the time betwixt the ceiling and the floor. For this reason, among others, he was always the most welcome and favored of visitors at the quilting frolics; indeed, if by the time the last line was marked out, and the last fold of the quilt turned, Bob Bagshot had not arrived, nothing went right. The men were dull and sulky, the girls full of pouts and angry tosses. But the moment that his familiar footstep was heard on the door-sill of the cabin, presto!—change!—begone, dull care!—everything came right in a trice. The boys rallied, and dashed at the girls; and the girls themselves fell to romping and shaking their petticoats with such enticing leers and mischievous ogles that Bob could do no less than kiss each one by turn all around the room. What wonder, then, that sagacious mothers, with all their partiality for the young man, should play shy with their ardent daughters when Bob Bagshot called to spend the night under their roof?

Now it happened that Bob had become deeply smitten with the pretty face, the plump limbs, and ripe charms of Miss Charity Plainlove, and of late months was getting to be a very frequent guest at Frogmarsh,

where he was a very great favorite. But it behoved him to play his game very cautiously here, for the plain, honest-hearted old farmer was not the man, by any means, who would tamely tolerate any undue familiarity with his girls. I do not charge that Bob had conceived, or designed to perpetrate any scandalous impropriety in connection with Miss Charity, but he certainly was fired with her beauty and charms to a much greater extent than he ever had been before, and just as certainly entertained no sort of intention about marrying her. However, he planned a great many fishing excursions, and muscadine hunts, and wild grape searches, in which he managed to have numerous agreeable tête-à-têtes with his fair innamorata, and set himself no little ahead in winning her good graces. Whilst this project was in full fervor, and waxing to a termination most delightful to Bob's yearning wishes, it happened that our friend, singing Randall (unluckily for him, poor fellow), was at the same time employed in getting cypress shingles for Mr. Plainlove, and was sojourning in his house. Returning one evening rather late from his labors, and taking the path which led to the house by way of the spring, Tony, on passing close by a cluster of fragrant vines which formed a sort of bower on the side of the trail, was startled no little at hearing a quick, sharp smack of a noise something like the crack of a good keen-turned wagon whip. Ever on the alert for goblin pranks, Tony stopped to listen, and cast a fearful glance through the bushes, when he was relieved, but piously shocked, to see his employer's pretty daughter most amorously embraced by Mr. Bagshot, who, in Tony's opinion, was scarcely less to be dreaded than a real devil, any way. Charity's quick eye, how-

ever, had found him first, and she managed most dexterously to push Bob from her, as though his familiarity had been distasteful. Charity was always a sly hussy!

Now, whether Tony ever actually mentioned the circumstance to Mr. Plainlove or not, I cannot exactly say; but certain it is that, on their return to the house, the manner of the old gentleman was so altered, and he treated his late favored guest with such marked coolness, that Bob ordered his horse, and put right off for home that night, boiling over with rage, and burning with mortification. Never before had he met with a reverse so decided, and although he was ready at all times to face any description of foe, and defied the whole army of evil spirits and ghosts, yet Bob was not one who could rest with an easy conscience under the just displeasure of an honest man. Sad and luckless discovery did that prove to poor Tony Randall, for Bob vowed and treasured deep vengeance, and Bob was a dangerous enemy when he had cause to be an enemy! The whole affair, however, blew smoothly over, and slumbered for months; and, in fact, had completely died away in the recollection of everybody save the victim of Tony's pious tattling, and one or two of his "clansmen true." Of these, the most prominent were Derry Dropper, commonly called Handy-Dandy, from his fine looks, and expert dashing ways, and Dick Bumbleby, a sly old dog of a roister, always ready for a spree where fun was the stake, and never known to desert his post over a noggin of apple toddy, or a bowl of whisky grog. These two were perfect antipodes in disposition, manner, and temperament.

Handy-Dandy, as his nickname imported, was active,

open-hearted, and free-handed in everything he did, and was scarcely less accomplished than Bob Bagshot himself in all that has been ascribed to that worthy hero; and when it came to shooting, Derry asked his leader no odds. His aim was more deadly than that of Boone, or Davy Crockett, for he had often been known to drop a buck dead in his tracks before he could make a bound, then, wheeling most alertly in his saddle, bring down the doe who had sprung off in the opposite direction, before she had got fairly out of pistol range. Richard, or Dick Bumbleby, on the contrary, was a clumsy, dozy-looking, inscrutable old blade, with nothing active about him but his brain, which was known to be so inventive in all matters of mischief that the neighbors used to dub him by the unconsecrated cognomen of *Old Hellcat*, which probably had been first suggested as much from the middle letter of his name as from his supposed satanic connections. Poor Dick! thy roistering days are long since over! But the wild lovers of good cheer never had a more faithful, long-headed ally than thou wert in the fine old days of thy prime! and well had it been if no worse man had ever breathed the air of this vexatious planet of ours!

If ever these three were detected in secret session, or joining heads on any scheme of rumpusing, the honest people of Simstown and the neighborhood were sure to suspect that mischief was brewing, and looked out sharply for squalls during the night. The poultry roosts were doubly sentineled, the bee-hives were strongly barricaded, the stable-doors carefully barred and locked, the yard and garden gates well pinned and clamped, and every watch-dog in the hamlet unchained. If an old rusty firelock

could be mustered by hook or by crook, it was thought best to load it with powder and peas, so that a harmless demonstration of fight might be made in case of assault on the girls' quarters. Woe to the gig or wagon, or any species of vehicle, which had been left unprotected on these nights of terror! The owner was always forced to drag the Buttahalchie for days afterwards, and he was lucky then if he was enabled to fish up the wheels of his vehicle in a whole state. But the favorite diversion was to catch up old stray horses, turned out to grass for the balance of life, and, tying wads of flaming turpentine to their stumps of tails, start the affrighted animals, charging and tearing, through the plantations and along the roads, neighing and snorting at such hideous rates as to make many a credulous and startled soul jump nimbly up, for fear that judgment day had come at last.

I think now that the sensible reader will agree with me that singing Randall was under goblin influence, or at least had jumped into bad business, the day and hour in which it fell to his lot to arouse the spleen of the Coryphæus of a band such as I have endeavored to describe; and to this worthy gentleman and his adventures it is now high time I should return.

Winter was now passed away, and spring succeeded, and one fine night a proposal was made by a sagacious old Simstown farmer that several should join in slaughtering a few fat young beeves for the purpose of sending them to the town market, where beef always commanded the finest prices. As it was a busy time in the crops, Tony Randall, as usual, was selected to conduct the transportation, negotiate the sale, and account on his return for each man's net profits. So day had scarcely

dawned on the following morn, when, nicely fitted off with a strong, light two-horse wagon, with the ghastly and reeking remains of yesternight's slaughter snugly stowed and packed, Tony mounted the lead mule, whip in hand, and started off at a merry round trot. On the brow of the hill just beyond the hamlet, he stopped a moment for his chosen companion and Christian brother; and Uncle Ned, already equipped for the journey, hobbled to his accustomed place in the wagon. As the day had been delightfully cool and pleasant, and no accident occurred to delay them on the road, the two travelers descried, long ere the noontide hour, the shining domes and lofty spires of the city, looming gorgeously in the broad sunlight; and being cheered up considerably by the beautiful sight, they quickened pace, and soon drove up and halted in the shade of the market-house on Main Street. Here, according to custom, Uncle Ned was left to mind the mules and beef, whilst Tony hurried off to find buyers for his produce. This was not so easily done at that hour of the day, and, despite the most vigorous efforts he could make, it was many hours past noon before he disposed of the last quarter of beef. He had now to trade off a bag or two of dried-apples belonging to some thrifty farmer's wife; get rid of several bundles of otter and buck hides which had been entrusted to him by a neighbor; besides making divers purchases of calicoes, and cotton head handkerchiefs, and a jug or two of mellow old Monongahela for the farmers themselves—who all adhered to the fine ancient custom of taking a glass of grog when they liked, or when a friend called to see them. By the time all the errands were run, and orders filled, and mules geared and hitched up, and everything ready to

start back, Tony and his companion beheld with quaking hearts that the sun was scarcely more than an hour high, whilst Black Creek was to be crossed at the distance of full seven miles from town, with a deep, sandy road for the most of the way at that. Nothing was left, however, but to make the best of it they could, for, as to remaining all night in town, at a heavy expense of man and beast, without at least a better apology than it was in Tony's power to offer, was altogether out of the question. They started, therefore, with heavy forebodings of evil, for, by the most hapless coincidence in the world, they had now found to their dismay that it was the awful anniversary of the old traveler's tragical fate. Had this been known before they left Simstown, it is more than probable that no reward could have induced either to undertake the journey on that day.

They had now hardly gone a mile beyond the environs of the city, struggling manfully to hasten through the deep sand which so inopportunely clogged and impeded their gait at this most trying and anxious moment, when a whippowil, all of a sudden, began to trill forth his gloomy and mournful notes, bringing increased sadness to their troubled bosoms, and most provokingly and remarkably, as they thought, following them for a mile or so further on their journey. Such a sign was considered almost fatal by old Ned, and he began seriously to misgive already. The sun was now beginning to dip, and despite the most vigorous pace to which they could urge the mules, it entirely disappeared before they completed the first five miles; and as evening deepened, and twilight, with its murky glimmerings, shrouded the objects ahead, the shadows of the trees already seemed, to their

excited visions, like so many huge skeletons waving their arms about and around in the obscurity.

At length, to their terror and agony of heart, darkness overtook them whilst yet a mile from the dreaded spot. The moon had not yet risen; and the stars, unveiled in all their beauty and resplendence, alone shed their mild and subdued lustre over the scene. But the beauty and calmness of the night had now no charms for these troubled brethren, for Tony had more than once already suggested to his more aged and dull-sighted companion that the stars were entirely too restless above, and shifted their places much too often to bode any good. Uncle Ned tremulously allowed that this was another most evil omen, and begged Tony to unite with him in a fervent prayer that the Almighty would not forget his servants in the hour of trouble, but would shield and defend them in any unsanctified conflict which Satan might then be planning against them. Accordingly, the old fellow proceeded to offer up a most eloquent petition, working himself up, as he progressed, to a full pitch of fervency, whilst Tony would occasionally scotch him with an earnest and dolorous amen. Scarcely was the prayer brought to a close when Tony opened loudly with one of his most melodious psalms, as if thus to keep up the flow of divine ardor with which they were, by this time, plentifully warmed; and his fine strong voice, accompanied by the old negro's bass, echoed delightfully through the woods which bordered the wide common on which they had now entered. The night was so calm and still that the lusty notes of the singers were distinctly heard at the farm-houses a mile or so distant from the road; and many, since the dire and melancholy catastrophe, have vividly

recalled, and detailed to wondering auditors, the mournful impressions made on them while listening to the solemn dirge.

It was now grown quite dark, and at length, with trembling anxiety, the hapless brothers reached the brow of the gentle hill which overlooked the gloomy recess of the ford, and which now did indeed appear to them as the entrance into the "Valley of the Shadow of Death." The last habitable house had been passed more than a mile back; it was at least as far to the first one beyond, and no living creatures but themselves were in sight, or near enough to aid them if accident should indeed befall. Under these circumstances, the pious souls thought it not irreverent to assist the warmth of divine grace by a swill of the old Monongahela which they had along, and they accordingly shook hands, and took several hearty swallows a-piece. A happy thought now occurred to singing Randall, which was to put the mules under a full career of headway down the hill, and, with the momentum thus gained, whip through the vale under a full volley of psalmody, storm vigorously the opposite hill, and gain the open space beyond at top speed.

The first act of this ingenious programme was finely executed; but, just as they got into the valley, and scented the fragrant waters of the creek rippling gently over the pebbly channel, the mules, as if suddenly possessed of a devil, plunged madly and uncontrollably, to their very bellies, in the dark gulf on the left side, and began to quench the thirst which the hot weather and active travel had so naturally produced. To increase the terrors inspired by this luckless prank, a large, deep-mouthed

owl greeted their entrance into the bloody pool, with a shriek of such startling energy as fairly to raise erect every hair on their heads. But now, whilst everything around was hushed into listening silence, their ears were appalled with a sound which struck a cold chill to their hearts, and made them awfully sensible of the ghostly associations of the time and place. A dull, clanging noise, something like the shock of metal, came from amongst the willow thickets on their right, and old Ned sank, shaking, into the bottom of the wagon as the idea of the drowned soldiers crossed his mind; whilst Tony made several husky, gurgling attempts to raise a hymn, in hopes thus to allay his restless spirits. But no mortal pen can paint the agony which seized them, when the night breeze bore to their ears the sound of a low, tremulous whistle from the slope of the hill, and, presently afterwards, the footfall of a horse striking on the hard ground. Tony recognized the signal, and his knees struck against the sides of his mule at a fearful rate, and his teeth chattered as though he had been seized with tertian ague; whilst old Ned, equally anticipating what was to come, lay sweating and groaning under piles of straw and drygood bundles. Their fears were indeed well grounded, for Tony presently descried the dim outlines of what seemed to be the figure of a stout and portly horseman, riding calmly and slowly down the hill, and he instantly knew it for the apparition of the murdered traveler. The cold damps gathered on his forehead as the spirit approached. A vague hope, however, struck him that it might, at last, be only a living person, benighted like himself, and he made a hoarse effort to draw up voice enough to venture on a hail; but, at that

moment, he was jarred through and through by the loud report of a pistol, and the air was immediately scented with a strong and sickening odor of brimstone. The blood curdled in Tony's veins, and his muscles became perfectly rigid from fright; he was like a petrified man for the rest of the time, endowed only with the sense of sight. True to the legend in every particular, the traveler fell heavily and clumsily from the saddle, with a deep, sonorous groan; a dark figure rushed out from the thicket, rifled the pockets of the fallen man, and then, mounting a huge black steed, which Tony then saw rise apparently from out of the earth, his whole neck and head in one solid flame, vanish in an instant on the top of the hill, according to the story. Tony now surrendered himself, soul and body, to the mercy of Satan. As for old Ned, the fire of the pistol had jarred all hearing and feeling out of him, and he lay in a fit of fortunate insensibility. But the horrid drama was not yet concluded; the noise of the explosion, or the familiar fumes of the brimstone, seemed to have evoked the ghosts of others who had yielded up their lives on the fatal spot. The air resounded with dismal wailings. Blazing fireballs whizzed threateningly around and about. Two spectral figures, with plumes and dragoon swords, were seen curveting on lank, bony horses, through the openings of willow branches, whilst a heavy body fell, as if from an impending limb, with a loud plash in the deep pool; and then the fireballs exploded simultaneously with a deafening roar, leaving all in total darkness.

Up to this time the gentle mules, thirsted almost to death, had stood with provoking calmness amidst the whole goblin array; but this last scene had been too

much even for their hardy nerves, and they plunged forward, blowing and snorting most furiously, with a dead aim for the direction home. About half way up the hill, the stupefied Tony lost his balance, and, to his agony and dismay, was hurled violently from his seat, and left alone and unaided to make his way through the ghostly foes that encompassed him. Yet, even in that awful moment, did the honest-hearted creature find time to experience one passing regret for the fate of his insensible old comrade, and to lament the probable loss of his employers' money and goods. * * *

The night passed and morning came, and the sun, rising in cloudless lustre, lighted with his glorious and cheering rays the scene of goblin revelry. But the return of his friendly and welcome light had been far too long delayed to bring another happy morrow to the unfortunate Tony. No visible traces of his fate were to be found, and singing Randall has never been since seen in Simstown or Columbus.

But, at an early hour of the day succeeding, an old planter in the neighborhood came suddenly upon a wagon which rested partly on a huge stump, with the tongue and hounds broken to pieces, and no sign of gear or horses in sight. On looking in, he observed an aged negro seemingly in a deep sleep, and detected a strong, fragrant smell of fine old Monongahela. He then saw a suspicious-looking jug, with the stopper out, and on shaking it discovered that it was scarcely more than half full of liquor. This, as he vainly imagined, unfolded the whole secret, and he applied several vigorous kicks to the old sleeper's brawny sides; and then he first found that it was the old patriarch Ned. He sent him

carefully home under the guidance of a trusty boy of his own, where, after accounting for and paying over all the money found in the coat of his missing brother, old Ned boldly told his story, and expressed his fears with weeping eyes for the fate of poor singing Randall. But the appearance of the jug, and the absence of the whisky, were against the worthy patriarch, and his master, wisely concluding that one drink very naturally led to more, discarded the faithful old servant from his confidence. But the patriarch's misfortunes ended not even with this. He was taken up by the church, and his story being cruelly discredited, old Ned was left hereafter to "serve God on his own hook" (as the Simstown lads irreverently expressed it), without even the faintest hope of ever being restored.

At length, a year or so afterward, a Methodist presiding elder, well known for his piety and Christian zeal (though he was also fond both of telling and enjoying a good joke in his way), happening to stay all night at Simstown, reported, with sundry grim smiles and grave contortions of the face, that he had actually seen "Brother Randall" at a camp-meeting on the far-off pine barrens of Fayette; that he still bore an excellent character; and that at last, with great reluctance, he had told him the marvelous cause of his mysterious disappearance, which tallied exactly with the story of old Ned. This same reverend and ingenious gentleman also visited Columbus shortly afterwards, and, witnessing the parade of a certain fine horse company, recollected that several of the wild Simstown boys were members of the corps, and was observed to shake his head most jocosely several times. It was observed, too, by a few sagacious persons, that,

whenever these conjectures of the good parson's were mentioned in the presence of the suspected trio, Bob smuggled his usually merry face into an expression of the most ludicrous gravity; Derry always began to whistle, or blow his horn if on horseback; whilst Dick Bumbleby would unconsciously dilate his mischievous, sleepy-looking little blue eyes, and at last contort the muscles of his mouth into a sort of half-roguish smile.

It is not for me to inquire further into the particulars of this legend; but my readers may, perhaps, have been sufficiently interested to find some pleasure in being told that the good parson, after measuring all these circumstances, after making a few more inquiries in the neighborhood, and comparing all with the story of old Ned and Tony Randall, succeeded in restoring the former to all his church privileges; whilst the latter still lives to enjoy a camp-meeting festival, although nothing has ever induced him of late years to remain out of doors later than sunset.

CHAPTER IX.

INKLING OF AN ADVENTURE WITH "OLD SOL."

I THINK the assertion may be very safely hazarded that few *characters* in these United States are so universally and affectionately known as the distinguished Southern comedian, Sol. Smith, Esq., far oftener called by his noted sobriquet of "Old Sol." Everybody likes him; and I have not learned from any source that he ever made an enemy in the whole course of his active life. Indeed, I believe he has met with extraordinarily fine luck in one particular, at least, for a professional man, which is that he has never excited the splenetic jealousy of histrionic compeers, although few actors have elicited such wide-spread admiration, or received such pleasing and substantial evidences of success. His theatrical career, since his reputation was established, has been a career of applause and popularity, and the side scenes of his life have given rise to more amusing anecdotes and really laughable incidents than any which have been concocted even in connection with Davy Crockett himself, that most original of all our American characters. His amiability and benevolence are proverbial; and his kindness and patronage to young aspirants to histrionic eminence are so generally known, that I believe it may be said "Old Sol" has been the means of calling into life more dramatic talent than any or all of his cotempo-

raries ; whilst his energy and enterprise in catering to the public amusement have long since entered his name on the note-book of the historian. Many, even, who do not know him personally (and I am one of the number) can recall some of the most agreeable associations of their lives in connection with his name, and I doubt not that he has warm friends and sincere admirers whom he has never seen. The peasant and the statesman, the votary of fashion and the humble mechanic, the moralist and the gamester, the pious and the wicked, the nabob and the beggar, are alike attached to some pleasant reminiscence of which "Old Sol" was the hero. His droll humor and inimitable acting have brightened a passing hour with many a victim of ruin and distress, and beguiled the tedium and ennui of many a listless voluptuary. He has often called back life and lustre to the fading eye of tremulous old age, and made the blood run warm again through withered veins as some emotion of delight thrilled the feeble frame. The young have felt more intensely the pleasures of hope and of the future, as some comic expression or grotesque contortion of the popular actor would cheat them into fits of welcome laughter, and drive away the melancholy of, perhaps, a first reverse. In fact, "Old Sol" holds a snug little corner in the heart of every one who has ever had the good luck to see him under full headway in the performance of some favorite and appósite comedy.

Now, although the distinguished comedian may chance to have as little real connection as anybody else with the following sketch, I have thought this short preface necessary to a full understanding by the reader of its point and incident. Indeed, it cannot be realized

at all unless one calls to mind the features and person of the old actor, and all the leading characteristics which have rendered his name famous apart from his professional celebrity. And if he shall be in the land of the living (as I sincerely and honestly trust he may be) when this composition reaches the public, I hope I shall have his pardon for the unauthorized introduction of his familiar and respected name.

It happened to me, then, several years ago, to be a passenger on board the elegant packet steamer Oregon, on her trip from Mobile to New Orleans, across the lovely Lakes of Borgne and blue-bosomed Pontchartrain. The boat was thronged with passengers of both sexes, but among all of them I discovered that I had not, for a wonder, a solitary acquaintance. As we were about to visit waters and scenes, however, which were always peculiarly alive with pleasant interest to me, I did not very greatly regret this fact, although I have as much quiet sociability in my nature as most people, and like to see a familiar face in a strange place as well as others.

On opening the register, to enter my name in time to secure an agreeable berth, I was surprised and rather delighted to observe, in neat, plain characters, the autograph (as I suppose it must have been) of the veritable "Old Sol" himself, enrolled as a volunteer passenger during our short cruise from Mobile to the Crescent City. Having taken care in this quarter for my comfort, I approached the gentlemen's saloon, in the main cabin, where I found most of the passengers already congregated. I took my seat in their midst, and looked cautiously around to find if I could detect in any one present the features and person of the celebrated actor, although

I questioned much my chances of success, especially as I had never seen Mr. Smith anywhere but on the stage. I was soon at fault, however, and ascertained, to my perfect satisfaction, that none in the saloon answered either to the various descriptions I had seen of "Old Sol's" manner and appearance in the social circle, or to my own vivid conjectures as to his every-day looks. Apart from the rest of the company, but rather nearer to the seat I had chosen, was a group of easy, well-dressed, mirthful companions, evidently intimate acquaintances, all arrayed around a small table, on which two or three were negligently resting their legs, at the same time that their bodies were snugly ensconced between the arms of the huge-cushioned chairs in which they so leisurely reclined. It was easy to perceive, at a single glance, that these were traveled gentlemen, whose familiarity with the world sustained them under all circumstances, and in any place, and had given them that enviable *negligé* and *nonchalance* which carry one so admirably and self-possessed through all trying situations, from the glittering parlor of a fashionable hotel to the social hall of a river steamboat or country tavern.

Prominent among the assemblage was a flashy, pert, talkative young gentleman, the very prototype of a genuine Broadway exquisite, of tall and rather handsome proportions, whose legs were gracefully crossed over a corner of the table, with his smooth, glossy hat half cocked on the side of his head, and his ivory-mounted cane playing alternately between his teeth and the toes of his shining boots. A pair of fierce, red whiskers curled over his cheeks, whilst his flowing beard would have shamed a dervise or a mullah. He was evidently

the leading personage of the set, for a short, chubby-faced, hawk-nosed gentleman at his side made a point of laughing always when he laughed or winked his eye knowingly; whilst a humorous-looking, sagacious-eyed, fat old fellow in his front, and a fidgety, grinning little Frenchman just in the rear, followed suit in all that was said or done by the hawk-nosed man. It seemed as if the likelihood of having "Old Sol" as a fellow-passenger had created considerable sensation in their little circle, as well as with me, for they were in a high conversational glee at some pretty tart and mirth-provoking criticism which the hero of the red whiskers had just uttered in connection with the appearance and traits of the Southern comedian. The thought occurred to me that they were playing rather a hazardous game, as the hour was now at hand when it was fair to presume that all who intended to go over were on board, and the worthy object of their wit and mirth himself, perhaps, quietly stowed away in some part of the cabin. The same idea struck the old fellow of the merry face, for he stopped long enough in his laugh to suggest that, as none of them knew the comedian by sight, it would be best to carry on their strictures in rather a lower tone. The words of caution had scarcely fallen from his lips when the curtains of a neighboring berth were softly pulled aside, the face of a middle-aged man peered suddenly out, and was turned towards the group with such a quizzical expression of dry, quiet humor that the laughers shrank coweringly aback, as though they had raised a ghost; whilst I, who had seen "Old Sol" only a night or two before, in his famous character of Dominie Sampson, could almost have sworn that I beheld the same

facetious twitches of the mouth, the same roguish leer that had then convulsed the whole theatre, when, met suddenly by Meg Merrilies at break of day on his solitary visit to the Kairn of Derncleugh, the counterpart of Scott's inimitable character, drawled out, with quaking accent, "prodigious!!" The "whiskered Pandoor" smirked, ejected a flake of dry, white spittle, hung his head with a sheepish, roguish glance of the eye at his companions, who all turned about like a parcel of idle boys suddenly caught by the schoolmaster at some mischievous prank. But they were not held long in this tortuous duresse, for the old gentleman of the quizzical face had only raised up, apparently, to ask of a passing servant if the hour for starting was come, and then dropped quietly back in his berth. I had heard and read enough of "Old Sol's" eccentricity and good-humored self-possession to know that this was precisely his mode of warfare under all like circumstances, and, despite my exertions to maintain a proper degree of gravity, could not forbear betraying my inward convulsions of amusement at the ludicrous scene by open, but subdued, laughter.

Scarcely had the apparition disappeared when the conclave regained their wonted ease of manner, and I was eagerly questioned by the hawk-nosed fellow, in an under tone, whether I could tell them if it really was "Old Sol." I politely declared my ignorance of the manager's person, and, of course, could give them no satisfaction. The servant to whom the mysterious tenant of the berth had spoken was then softly called up and questioned in like manner. He had never seen Mr. Smith in his life, except at the theatre, did not know him from any other

old gentleman, and had no idea of his identity with the inmate of No. 18. In the midst of these perplexing wonders and surmises, the last stroke sounded, and the boat was soon gliding swiftly through the water. The passes and bars were safely cleared, dinner was served, and we sat down to a most sumptuous and luxurious repast. The tenant of No. 18 must have been a sleepy-headed, lazy old fellow, with wonderful control over his appetite, for he did not make his appearance at table, although the savory steam from the numerous tempting dishes laid before us must have penetrated the curtains of his berth, and inflamed his olfactories no little, if he was not entirely innocuous to all assaults of the kind. After having watched in vain for his appearance, I left my seat among the first, desirous to gain the deck and witness the opening beauties of those scenes which always draw forth my admiration. The wide expanse of Mobile Bay was spread out before and around ; its limpid waters glistening with the rich cerulean hues of approaching evening, and its broad bosom reposing in the lovely calm of midsummer night. The sight was beautiful beyond description to one whose eyes rested the whole year round on woods, and fields, and land prospects ; and such were the stillness and pleasant temperature of the evening, that I almost forgot hoar winter was in its solstice. Away to the right could be seen the red cliffs of the opposite shore, whilst immediately in front the eye was caught with an immense array of masts and spars as the distant ships rose up on the horizon, presenting the appearance of a large forest of decayed and leafless trees. Numerous sail craft, as cutters, schooners, and brigs, were strung out on the broad pathway, laden with the staple commodity of the

city, which they were bearing to the larger-sized vessels anchored in the bay. During some hours past, the white shores of Dauphin Island had been in sight, and now, as night approached, we skirted along its coast, and found that our captain designed, in consequence of the low state of water in the lakes, to take the outside passage. As twilight deepened into the shadows of night, the ladies appeared on the after-deck, and in a few moments we plunged into the blue waters of the gulf. I stood alone by a large brace, and indulged a train of fanciful classic visions. I thought of the beautiful stories of ancient mythology, of Ovid, of Hesiod, and of Homer, and wished almost to see the lady Amphitrite in her chariot of coral drawn by sea-horses, and guarded by Nereides and Tritons, as they had loved to picture her, rising from her submarine abode to welcome the fair daughters of earth to her ocean domains. But all these and kindred vagaries were at once dispelled by the ringing of the supper bell, and I went below to forget the classics, in hope of catching a glimpse of "Old Sol," if, indeed, he was on board.

Again, however, did the unknown tenant of No. 18 fail to make his appearance, though I discovered more eyes than mine scanning both sides of the table in hopes to detect and identify his quizzical physiognomy. How did he manage to fast so long! His features bore no trace of disease, for the very slight glimpse of them which had been caught satisfied us that he was ruddy and healthful-looking, and, therefore, he was no invalid! Probably it was not "Old Sol" after all! But I began to suspect, very strongly, that, if the tenant of No. 18 was indeed the eccentric old manager, he was meditating some amusing, but mischievous freak by which to see

fun, in his own way, with these exquisite and ingenious critics.

After tea, I took the liberty of sauntering into the principal saloon, and seated myself on one of the magnificent sofas which line its whole circumference. The whiskered young gentleman and his three subordinates had preceded me, for, when I entered, I found all four of them seated at a table, arranging to play some game of cards with the ladies of their set. The hawk-nosed fellow was now describing, with ludicrous gestures, and in loud, jovial tones, the adventures of the day, and, thinking that No. 18 was still securely lolling in his berth, produced a general laugh at the expense of the whiskered hero. He was just in the act of imitating, by a most contorted expression of countenance and ridiculous caricature, the confusion of his friend as the face of No. 18 was suddenly thrust forth, when, Monsieur Tonson-like, the door of the state-room next adjoining was heard to open softly, and a tall, quiet-looking old gentleman, with the identical head and face of No. 18 affixed to his shoulders, with the same humorous and grotesque visage, walked suddenly out, and, casting a roguish, inimitable sort of leer at the astonished group, passed on through the saloon back again into the gentlemen's cabin. So unexpected was this second apparition, so totally astounding was it to the whole company, that the hawk-nosed fellow still remained in his affected position, as though spell-bound; the hero of the whiskers gaped instead of laughing; the little Frenchman drew up his shoulders with a wry shrug; the fat man snapped his jaws suddenly together like the closing of a rat-trap; and the ladies, mischief-loving wenches always, hid their pretty

faces in their handkerchiefs, and indulged a silent but uncontrollable mirth. In this condition of confusion and surprise, I left them, more deeply amused than I can possibly describe, and walked towards the clerk's office. This last stroke of seeming humorous revenge was like "Old Sol" to the very life, and I began seriously to believe that I had at last seen his embodiment, and in full character at that. It now appeared that No. 18, whoever he was, had a lady or ladies also aboard, and that he possessed at least a species of ubiquity which rendered it hazardous to talk of him anywhere on the boat.

I had not reached my destination, however, when the whole four of them rushed past, and made direct for the same place, declaring audibly that they would find out either from the clerk or from the register whether the tenant of No. 18 was "Old Sol" or not. The window was down, and the office closed for the night, and the register had also been taken away and secured for the rest of the trip. This was perplexing enough, and one of the number proposed to seek out the captain, and ascertain from him. But the captain, another happened to know, was strictly a business man, rather gruff when on duty, and this suggestion was abandoned. All the servants, however, were beat up and mustered, but all declared their inability to satisfy any inquiry relative to the identity of the mysterious personage.

A second proposition was made that all should adjourn to the bar, and take a bottle of wine in remembrance of their surprises and perplexities. They very politely insisted that I should accompany them, and, having no apology at hand, I felt obliged to comply. Whilst the cork was being drawn, my friend of the red whiskers

turned the conversation on what had transpired, declaring, with an oath, "that he would ask the old *scoundrel* on sight who the deuce he was, just for curiosity." The glasses had just then been filled, and all were preparing to quaff the foaming and sparkling contents, when once again, and more inopportunely than ever, old No. 18 advanced from a dark, shadowy recess near the engine room, and, casting the same characteristic leer at the staring crowd, walked out towards the bow of the boat. The gaseous bubbles evaporated, and the dazzling scintillations died away—and not a glass touched the lips of him who held it until the last echo of footsteps was lost in the roar of the steampipe; and even then the beautiful wine was drunk with a very cold welcome. So far from asking after the information he had just threatened so fiercely, my friend of the red whiskers was the last to recover his surprise on the present occasion; and even when the others had again pumped up enough self-possession to indulge another laugh at these singular recurrences, their leader joined in with a very sardonic expression. This last most ludicrous exploit closed the series of adventures with "Old Sol," or his eidolon, for the balance of the night; and I may here say that, if No. 18 was in truth the same as this distinguished and eccentric Southern Manager, there never has been a time in his whole successful comic career when his fame as a humorist had risen so high in the estimation, at least, of the whiskered gentleman and his associates, whoever they were, which I am not able to tell.

We were now fairly launched into the swelling bosom of the Mexican Gulf, and the slight rolling of the steamer, now and then, had already produced its nauseating

effects on some of the passengers. I was again seated alone near my old roost by the brace on deck, endeavoring to force my vision through the dim obscurity of the ocean waste, and watching the myriads of the celestial host as they burst upon the sight one after another, like the gliding figures of a vast camera, only far more dazzling. The moon was not yet risen, and I was waiting anxiously to catch the first glimpse of its rosy lustre when emerging from beyond the watery horizon. A long, golden-hued streak, flashing forth numerous sparkling beams, heralded the majestic approach, then widening gradually into a broad and blazing sheet, and shading its first yellow tinges by a deep glow of crimson glory, the lustrous crescent peeped above the illumined waters, and in a moment afterwards the whole sea glistened with its full-orbed silver light. How dull and lifeless do the puny efforts of men, with all their boasted art and skill, appear before a picture thus gorgeously sketched by nature's hand!

In a few hours more, we were safely inside of Cat Island, and speeding forward to the Rigolets; and (owing to a slight accident off one of the islands) did not come in sight of Fort Pike until broad day, which is generally passed before midnight. Without approaching at all to the grand or magnificent, this is decidedly one of the prettiest places in the United States. Its lovely lawns of blue grass, and its neat, smiling yellow cottages rise like an oasis to the eye, and relieve most agreeably the waste of dreary waters and glowing fens around. We passed its frowning cannon just as the sun rose, and heard the morning gun, and beheld the "star-spangled banner" as it was run up to meet the earliest rays.

Just as the bell rang for breakfast, the bow of our elegant vessel skimmed the margin of Pontchartrain, and I turned away from the lovely prospect lingeringly and reluctantly. When I gained the cabin, I found the gentleman of the red whiskers and his satellites busily engaged in despatching their morning meal. Again did I scan the row of eager eaters for the now familiar visage of No. 18. He was not to be found, and I took my seat among the rest, fearing we had seen the last of this unknown personage. The clerk, engaged with his books, did not take his accustomed seat at the table, and the register was still in his possession. The four unfortunate gentlemen looked really disappointed as these last chances of finding out the identity of No. 18 with "Old Sol" melted away; and when, just after breakfast, they had congregated in front of the wash-room to smoke their cigars, and were venting their disappointment aloud, I reached the door just in time to see the sly, quizzical old rogue stalk out from his ablutions and pass through their midst with a smile which told plainly enough how much he was enjoying their fourth surprise and confusion. A serious consultation was now held. The fat man suggested that, if No. 18 really was "Old Sol," and, in that event, if "Old Sol" had not lost much of his love for comic mischief, he would take occasion, one day, just so sure as he lived, to caricature the whole scene in a manner which would just as surely bring *them* (who, he admitted, had been rather *too* rude and imprudent) into the most annoying species of ridicule. He moreover added, with a very ugly oath, by way of enforcing his opinion, that "Old Sol" had a more inventive genius in that line than even "Old Nick" himself, and that, unless

some apology could be offered, he verily feared the morning papers might blazon the whole affair to all New Orleans to-morrow. The whiskered gentleman paled visibly, and looked awfully blank as this suggestion fell on his ear, for he was, after all, a sensitive body; the hawk-nosed fellow bleared his eyes, and made a dry attempt to whistle down his apprehensions; the little Frenchman shrugged more feelingly and emphatically than ever; whilst the fat man himself twisted his mouth half way on the road towards his left ear, and rubbed his capacious paunch with evident uneasiness. Notwithstanding the diversion which this sage and ludicrous consultation inwardly afforded me, I could not help now sympathizing with them, after having thus found that they really were men of sensibility, though certainly somewhat on the cockney order. I knew quite too much of "Old Sol" not to believe readily what the fat man had said, and more besides, unless he too should have discovered (as, considering his keen perception, it was likely he had) that they were more frisky and imprudent than really rude. The manager is everywhere reputed to be eminently amiable and forbearing, and (if this was himself), in the event named, I concluded he might be fully satisfied with his humorous revenge. It was agreed, however, by the confederates, that the hawk-nosed fellow, the little Frenchman, and the fat man should attend to the ladies and baggage after the boat landed, whilst the whiskered gentleman should guard the gangway in every direction, that he might not miss introducing himself to No. 18, and, in case it was "Old Sol," to offer humble apologies for what had happened. The reader is not, by any means, to suppose that, during

these whole laughable adventures of my four friends, I had not been somewhat curious myself to make the same discovery as to the identity of No. 18 with the celebrated comedian and manager, though from a very different motive from that which had inspired these luckless gentlemen to hazard a personal inquiry for satisfaction. I resolved, therefore, to throw myself in the way when this rencontre took place between the tenant of No. 18 and my friend of the red whiskers and bushy beard.

About three hours before noon, the boat drew up by the wharf at the lake end of the Pontchartrain railroad, and all was bustle and excitement to get ashore and secure a ticket before the cars came down from the city. Turning the care of my baggage entirely over to the trusty servant who accompanied me, I took possession of a sofa near the saloon where I knew all must pass in leaving the boat. The gentleman with the red whiskers was promenading rapidly in the same neighborhood, awaiting the appearance of the mysterious personage. Most of the ladies had passed out long since, and the gentlemen were fast thinning on board. I began to fear that No. 18 had given us the slip, or else did not intend going ashore. Probably he was, after all, an officer or stockholder connected with the boat! Or he might be a gentleman of mere leisure, steaming it alternately between the two cities! My friend of the whiskers increased the gait of his promenade, and was evidently growing very impatient. I had almost concluded to take my leave, and had actually closed the book I pretended to be reading, when, presto! the door of the ladies' saloon was opened, and forth came the truant of No. 18, with a long black surtout drawn over his small-clothes, with his features more

quizzically drawn than ever, and, *mirabile dictu!* a beautiful, fair-haired, graceful young lady leaning most charmingly on his left arm! A roguish smile dimpled her mouth and rosy cheeks; and when, hat off, right foot advanced a pace—cane most exquisitely thrown up under the left arm-pit, whilst the head rested in his hand—and with an affected smirk and low bow, the red-whiskered dandy approached to salute the old gentleman, I could perceive that she was almost convulsed with laughter, which she was struggling to repress.

Her appearance was wholly a surprise, and had been a fatal damper to my friend, who had prepared the whole of his plan of action before encountering the resistless glances of her heart-piercing, sparkling blue eye, now preternaturally refulgent with smothered mirth. He was taken all aback, and thrown *hors de combat* most sadly and irretrievably. His tongue refused to do its office, and he stood as if suddenly enchanted, in the most ludicrous attitude imaginable, while the elderly gentleman, who relaxed not a single muscle of his comical physiognomy, passed quietly on with a half bow to the bewildered dandy, and (as I thought) a very quizzical wink of the eye at me.

I know not whether it be so, but I shall believe, to my dying day, that this unknown personage had either overheard, or been fully warned by some mischievous eavesdropper, of the consultation and agreement in front of the wash-room. The laughing damsel, his own inimitable and farcical manner, and the long delay after most others of the passengers had left the boat, all go to prove this much. At any rate, if the tenant of No. 18 was in very truth the eccentric Southern Manager, he has never, even

in the "Lying Varlet" or "Dominie Sampson," made happier strokes at humor. But I went ashore, perfectly ignorant as to the question of identity betwixt the two personages. The captain and clerk were both out of reach, in the hurry and bustle of discharging the boat's freight, and all information was blocked, therefore, from this quarter. I did not see the old man or his fair companion afterwards, although I watched to see them at the St. Charles.

I may as well say, too, that I never saw the whiskered gentleman, or any of his associates, after I parted from them at the depot in the city. Whether I shall ever be able to solve the riddle of identity at all is now extremely questionable. Several of the manager's friends, to whom I have mentioned these incidents, have seriously doubted whether he could have been the singular tenant of No. 18; but they allow at the same time that it was some one who both represented and imitated him remarkably well. Others again have thought differently, and declare the whole affair to have been too much like "Old Sol" for the tenant of No. 18 to have been any body but his very self in *propria personæ*.

I leave the courteous and kind reader, therefore, in the same ignorance and to the same conjectures which have sharpened my own curiosity, and employed my guessing faculties. If, in some future volume of the "Anecdotical Recollections," the humorous author shall not give to his readers a more racy and amusing account of a like adventure, I shall conclude, of course, that the eccentric occupant of No. 18 was another person than "Old Sol."

CHAPTER X.

A CAMPAIGN BARBECUE IN THE SOUTHWEST.

It was my lot, during the last Presidential campaign, to attend a barbecue furnished jointly by the two political parties, and at which it was understood that both whig and democrat were to speak alternately. Being a specially invited guest, as soon as I arrived on the ground the joint committee came promptly and politely forward, and asked me to the rostrum or scaffold which had been erected for the accommodation of the speakers, and of the favored few who, like myself, were sufficiently well off in the way of active friends to be furnished with a comfortable seat.

The speakers had been selected for a week beforehand, and as it was to be a regular fisticuff fight, or genuine party conflict, these had been chosen with special reference to their efficiency in the stumping line, and none who were not fairly posted up with facts and foibles bearing on the character of either candidate were allowed to consume the precious time set apart to make converts to the one side or the other. Calm, dispassionate argument, sound reason, and a candid exposition of the principles which separated the two parties, were, it was distinctly understood, to be totally expurgated and eschewed. The discussion was not to be hampered with such useless supererogation; the people would not

listen; the occasion would be lost alike to both Cass and Taylor. In fact, I discovered that all, of each party, who, from previous discussions, had been found able to scold the loudest, quarrel the fiercest, abuse the soundest, and who possessed the art of speaking the longest without coming to the point at issue, were the favored champions of this debate. Thus, whigs who never in their lives had heard of Lewis Cass had come there perfectly rampant to have him dissected and picked to tatters; and, on the other hand, democrats who, a month or so before, would have "pitched into" their nearest friend, or neighbor, who would have rashly ventured to say the least harsh thing against Gen. Taylor, came, like butchers to the slaughter pen, whetted keenly to hear him triumphantly degraded, and hurled from his high and proud position. Sad comments on the permanence of republican governments!

The meeting was respectably attended by both sexes. Of the number present, it was soon ascertained that there were 109 democrats, 87 whigs, 3 neutral, and one raw Irishman, a well-digger by trade, who swore lustily, when questioned, "that he had nivir heard of any Prisidint but Andhrew McJackson, and he meant to vote for him, dead or alive, as sure as swate Jasus was crucified."

"Well, but Jerry," said a warm old democrat present, "the General has served his time long ago, and has been dead and buried these three years."

"Divil may care," replied the honest and simple-minded old Hibernian, who often boasted that he had been *baten* under Packenham, and taken prisoner at New Orleans by Jackson, "and suppose, Misther, he takes it into his hot-head to come back agin, who 'll hinder him,

think you? Why, man, I saw a cannon ball splet to flenders aginst his forehead at New Orleans, and him nivir so much as staggered."

This satisfied the democratic portion of his audience, and was justly considered a knock-down argument by the whigs; and, therefore, both sides determined to make all the effort at the three neutrals on the ground, one of whom was an old widow lady whose son would just be of age in time to vote in November. The next was a quiet and wealthy old planter, famed for his devotion to cotton fields, and his ignorance of politics, and who had unfortunately lost part of his palate, which caused him to speak a nasal dialect of his own, very unintelligible, and very difficult to get out. The third was his overseer, a fat, merry-faced, rubicund fellow, who was supposed to have his opinion sneakingly made up, but chose, from prudential motives, to remain ostensibly on the fence with his testy old employer, who gave him the best sort of wages, besides supporting his family. To make a dash at these three, then, was the object of all the gathering, all the victuals, and all the speaking; for, in general, at such places, people who have not made up their minds rarely attend, both from disapproving of such evidences of party ferocity, and from the desire to avoid the officious zeal and attentions of the noisy brawlers who there congregate to scatter documents and diffuse their own gleanings. And, indeed, whole flocks of dense, busy, and patriotic partisans were now seen strutting and perambulating through the crowd, their pockets stuffed to bursting, and their hats barely surmounting the crown of their heads, from an overflow of newspapers and pamphlets within. No rebuff could silence them, no

hint could be made intelligible to them; whilst, like a parcel of bull-terriers when rat-hunting, they kept a constant eye on the motions of each other, fearing that some adverse document might be slipped slyly into some plain old voter's hands without its corresponding antidote.

"I see you are disengaged, my friend!" said a zealous whig, going up to a tall, bulky, homespun-dressed farmer who sat alone under a huge oak tree; "here is the last 'Louisville Journal;' you will find it *very* interesting."

"The 'Louisville Journal,' is it?" asked a hot democrat, sneeringly, who had followed him up. "I wonder you can offer the old man such a dirty, contemptible sheet. Here, sir, is the 'Washington Union,' the organ of the government, and the best and truest text of genuine democracy."

"Very true," answers the whig, contemptuously. "A lying, slanderous, foul paper, edited by a driveling fanatic. Now, sir, if you want a decent, dignified paper, allow me to hand you the 'National Intelligencer,' which never stoops to personal abuse."

"Yes, and let him see how a wool-dyed whig, who belongs to the Mexicans, can talk about American statesmen and presidents—a vile print, that is always against the government," replied the exasperated democrat, with furious gestures.

"Mexican, hey?" said the whig, elevating his eyebrows. "I wonder *what* Santa Anna would say to that!"

"What do you mean?" asked the democrat, bristling like a wild boar.

"Oh, just ask James K. Polk, and he'll tell you all about it from beginning to end," said the other, winking at the farmer.

"See here, gentlemen," exclaimed the sturdy countryman, rising, and regarding the contestants with a glance that showed plainly he meant what he was saying, "I don't care, and didn't come here to be bothered with any such chat, and I ain't agoing to be, mind. I am able to pay for my own papers, and know how to read them without your aid. So clear out, if you please; I'm in no humor to be plagued by you."

"But, my good friend—" started the whig, poking his bundle at him.

"My dear sir," began the other, alertly slipping a parcel in the flap pocket of the old man's coat.

"See here, you pestersome rascals," said the countryman, extending his brawny arms, and shoving them from each side roughly, with their papers after them, "if you don't get off from me, I'll drub both of you into a cocked hat."

A number of lookers-on around burst into a hearty laugh at this ludicrous discomfiture of the two zealous partisans; and, as the countryman still stood in a menacing attitude, with his huge fist most ominously clenched, each of the newspaper knights gathered up his rejected documents with a hasty, apprehensive sort of motion, bending away over, with one leg stretched cautiously out to guard against a sudden onset, and then stole sheepishly off to another part of the ground.

At this moment, the marshal ascended a high stump in the centre of the grove, shouting out, with stentorian voice, "Oh yes! oh yes! this way, gintlemen, if you please! Gintlemen," he continued, swelling with importance as the gaping crowd of rustics gathered around him, "gintlemen, you will take notice that din-

ner will be served just at one o'clock, at which time due notice will be given by me. The first thing in order is the speeches. One side will speak first, and the other side next."

"I say, uncle Ben!" shouted a greedy, hungry-looking fellow, tiptoeing over the crowd, and addressing the marshal, "how many sides speaks before dinner?"

"Look here, Sam Huckleby, you must hold in, or leave this here crowd," replied the marshal to his interrupter, and then again, turning to the bystanders, he continued: "You see, gintlemen, each speaker will occupy a hour and a half, subject to be called down to the very second. Arter two has talked, then comes dinner, and the ladies is to go up first, and then the men. Those that don't git places at the first table needn't be afeard. We've axed you here, my friends, and we've got a plenty to feed you all leargely. So, now, gintlemen, to the stand—when dinner's over, we'll have two more speeches to cool down on. Let all go and listen."

In obedience to this programme, the crowd of eager listeners assembled noisily around the rostrum, alike inflamed with expectation of a treat in the conflict now about to come off, and of a more acceptable treat in the smoking dinner to succeed. The old widowed dame, mother of the rising voter, was conspicuously and comfortably seated in a chair immediately under the stand, with her back to the speakers; while the sore-eyed old planter and his jolly-looking overseer were paraded to a rude sort of bench just in front. As for the sturdy follower of Andhrew McJackson, an old-fashioned Irish junk (which the sly old rogue carried in his pocket) had done its work by this time, and that honest gentleman had

been ingeniously cajoled from the ground by one or two of the old Hickory stand-bys, who admired too much his genuine loyalty to have him more roughly treated.

"Gintlemen," again said the marshal, rising, "I have the honor of introducing to you my honorable friend Capt. Cockroach, who will tell you something about Cass and Butler."

According to preconcerted arrangement among the democrats present, Capt. Cockroach was cheered and huzzaed as he rose, bowing and bobbing to the crowd. He then began his harangue with a spirited return of thanks and a few congratulatory remarks at the brightening prospects of the Baltimore nominees. All this time, however, he had been arranging his plan of battle, and preparing his batteries, which were drawn in the shape of immense piles of documents from a pair of wallets that were conveniently hung over the bar of the stand. I soon found that it was no part of Capt. Cockroach's tactics to stand a siege, or proceed on the defensive, and that the worthy uncle Ben had egregiously missed the mark when he said that the speaker would talk about Cass and Butler. He scarcely called their names once, but opened a distant dropping fire right away at the gallant old whig candidate. This bombardment lasted for something over half an hour, and then the captain unmasked a light grape-shot battery, and rattled away with such an incessant shower, that I almost thought Bragg had turned Mexican, and was pouring in a counter fire of "grape" at his old commander. It was evident, however, from the looks of the crowd, that old Zack had not been wounded yet, although some of the democrats were clapping and stamping merrily enough. The speaker

cast a furtive look to see if his assault had made any impression on the anxious class. The old lady's head was down, and she was calmly rocking to and fro in her chair; the old planter looked a little out of sorts; but the overseer was grinning away, as much amused at the action of the crowd as at the ridicule of the speaker, looking first from one to the other. The affair was yet in its crisis, and the captain concluded to let loose his line of heavy pieces. It opened with a deafening roar, and the whigs all began to look a little blue. "Old Zack was a man without principles; didn't know what a tariff was from the full moon; only knew the bank by the money his whig friends had drawn from it; was afraid to endorse either; he was, in fact, a crawfish, that took two steps back to one forward——"

"Helloh, there," shouted a young, verdant whig, "did the old fellow *crawfish* at Bony Vistar?"

This side volley took the captain *à la ambuscade*. He was momentarily forced to slacken fire, and fall back; and the whigs made the welkin ring, and the democrats began to cry "put him out—no interruption!"

"Yes, gintlemen," said uncle Ben, "interruptions is agin the rules—you may clap, and stomp, and holler a little, but you mustn't talk to the speakers."

The Captain, however, had been awfully floundered, and did not recover so easily as his friends hoped. He now found that it was necessary to leave the centre of attack, and divert his enemies by a flank manœuvre. With this view he pushed forward his reserve battery, and opened a furious and merciless cannonade against the person and character of the whig candidate for Vice-President.

In the midst of these Demosthenian invectives, so unsparingly launched, the passing breeze ever and anon would fill the gorgeous whig banner, which, floating above, bore, reversely to old Zack's, the picture of Mr. Fillmore; and as his handsome, open, and manly features would be exposed, I fancied I saw in their benign and frank expression a more than powerful rebutter to the whirlwind of abuse which was beating against him. Calmly and smilingly that fine face beamed alike before friends and opponents, inspiring the last with reluctant respect, and filling the first with irrepressible admiration; and once, in the very midst of a violent philippic, as the stern, Jove-like features of old Rough and Ready were wafted half around, so that *his* face rested side by side with that of Fillmore (as if to cover him with parental solicitude from the attack thus leveled against the stranger in his own sunny South), the distant hills again rang with a shout sent forth from the bosoms of those who welcomed the agreeable omen.

Still the words and charges of the infuriated orator seemed to tell with his hearers on the anxious bench: the suspicious old planter grew uneasy and restless at the array of testimony brought up to prove the Vice-President as an abolitionist.

"Whad is the dabe of thad bad he's dalking aboud, cad you tell, bister?" said he, in smothered accents through his nose, appealing to a man at his side.

"The man he's talking about!" said the other, who happened to be a whig. "You may well ask that question, for his own mother wouldn't know him as Cockroach describes him—why, he's talking about Millard Fillmore."

"Billar Fillbore, hey!" repeated the old man—"well, I'll dry and recolleed Bister Billar Fillbore."

"I hope you will," said a democrat, who happened to overhear the conversation. "He's a ranker abolitionist than old Arthur Tappan himself! Sir, I raally and truly believes his heart's as black as the ace of clubs. Millard Fillmore for Vice-President, indeed!"

"Not quite so black, though, as *his* heart who 'prayed for the speedy abolition of slavery everywhere,'" answered the whig with a knowing wink at the old man.

"And who bade thad prayer, bister?" asked the old man, with an inquisitive expression.

"Lewis Cass," answered the whig, quickly.

"Yes, but you don't tell the whole story," put in the democrat.

"Thad is quide enough for be"—replied the old man. "Bister Lewiz Cazz, hey! Well, I'll dry and not forged Bister Lewiz Cazz either! Jimmey," he continued, turning to his overseer, and punching him in the side, "dond led 's forged to vode agaidst Bister Billar Fillbore, and Bister Lewiz Cazz both."

"No, I won't forget it, Mr. Hardcase," replied his obsequious friend.

Whilst this sage controversy was going on, the allotted hour and a half of Capt. Cockroach expired, and he sat down amidst prolonged and vociferous cheers.

"Gintlemen," said uncle Ben, the marshal, again rising before the audience, "gintlemen, Capt. Cockroach having got through, let me introduce my honorable friend Maj. Gunsmasher, who will talk to you about the other side of the question."

The democrats, who all along had occupied the front

seats about the stand, now fell back to make way for the whigs, who came rushing up *en masse*, shouting for Maj. Gunsmasher, and cheering Taylor and Fillmore. At the same time, a double-jointed, brawny negro, piloted by an assistant whig marshal, tottered up to the back of the stand, and with a hearty effort set down a huge leathern trunk which contained the major's ammunition. From this the whig champion began to draw forth document after document, and book after book, piling them all regularly up before him, until at last he succeeded in constructing a barricade which looked for all the world like a picture of one of the forts at Monterey, and behind which the valiant major could just be fairly seen as he armed and prepared for the conflict.

"Them's the licks"—said a whig to those around him. "I tell you, boys, I knows Gunsmasher, and he ain't a going to leave an inch of hide on Cockroach."

"By Jing, I hope he'll peel him as raw as a skinned ingon, for he's gin old Zack no quarter," said another.

"Yes, he desarves to have his tallow melted out'n him," put in a third.

"Don't get sore yet awhile, fellers," said a democrat, who was standing near. "We've got something hotter behind yet."

"Yes, and if you stays here until Gunsmasher's done, you'll go home scabbier than ever you did before," replied the first spokesman.

"Yes, you'll want mullen and slippery elm fur a month to come," said the second.

"Hurrah for Cass and Billy Butler," shouted the confident and defying democrat, walking away.

The major had now commenced his escalading and

sharp-shooting. Capt. Cockroach had relied solely on broadsides; the major seemed rather to prefer small arms, which, if less destructive, were far more annoying. But in one respect their tactics were similar; they both believed, like Scipio, that the best way to drive Hannibal out of Italy was to carry the war into Africa.

Accordingly, the major had not more than discharged his first round, before he pitched full tilt against Gen. Cass, and poured out a continuous, rolling fire of pepper corns and mustard seed, recollecting that Napoleon by the same ingenious plan had swept the Mamaluke cavalry from the face of the desert. Before the first half hour had well passed, the honest-hearted and illustrious senator was perforated through every pore, and literally blown to atoms by piecemeal. Figures, which, the major sagely remarked, never were known to lie, were arrayed, and sentences quoted, and facts brought to bear which stripped him of all claim to honesty, and I doubt not that many left the ground fully believing that the veteran Cass was a highway robber; just as, in the other case, many democrats had drunk in the round assertion of Capt. Cockroach, that Mr. Polk had planned all of Gen. Taylor's battles, and was entitled to the credit of all his victories. Every luckless expression, every inadvertent act, every hap-hazard and natural boast, every feature of his public character, and every transaction of his private life were brought up in judgment against the honest old senator. The broad and beautiful democratic banner waved above the head of the speaker, opposite to that of the whigs, and the burly, frank countenance of Gen. Cass stood out with bold relief in his

favor, stamped with benevolence, and wreathed with a lurking expression of stoic calmness.

It is not a bad idea to paint the faces of antagonists for these high offices on our party banners! It restrains many an impudent burst of factional malignity, and wins us, by association, from the passion of party to the purer shrine of patriotism!

After some few side thrusts at the want of proper charitable feeling (as the major called it) displayed by his adversary in regard to Mr. Fillmore, and an eloquent defence of that distinguished personage, Maj. Gunsmasher was also called down to time; and then the long-expected, eagerly-desired, inspiring signal for dinner was pompously *muezzined* by the chief marshal, and a general dash was instantly made for the tables. These were arranged in parallel rows, at intervals only of a few feet, and close beside the savory, smoking pit. The ladies were quickly provided for, and then each voter, rejoicing in his free privileges, fell greedily to work. Roasted beef, and mutton saddles, and greasy, barbecued shoats, and venison haunches, and whole armies of minor victims were indiscriminately assaulted and unceremoniously dispatched. Plates rattled, and dishes cracked, and tumblers rang forth their harmonicon notes, and the onslaught of knives and forks resounded and reverberated like the clash of arms in an old-fashioned conflict. A distant listener might even have heard the sharp smack of lips, and the more appalling crash of teeth as grinders tore apart the quivering flesh from its parent bone. Political animosities were greased over at this welcome and all-healing shrine, and Cass men and Taylor men joined forces in the common foray. It was like Marion

feasting the British officer on his roasted potatoes, and then telling him that there was a Bryseis in dispute, about whom they must fight to-morrow. Well! better over a smoking dinner, I think, than not at all!

In the afternoon, two short speeches were delivered to the dull and drowsy auditors, and then the wireworkers of each party eagerly ran up to find the state of opinion among the three cases for which they had waged mortal strife for the last six hours. All was anxious expectation.

"Well, old man," said a democrat to the old sore-eyed planter, who was calmly picking his teeth, "now that you have your head and belly both well filled, how do you stand?"

"If you are dalking to be, by friend," replied the old planter, shaking his toothpick, "I cad dell you by bind wad fully bade up long ago—"

"How—how?" exclaimed a dozen eager voices.

"Why, I shall vode for old Zag Daylor," was the reply.

"What!" said a Cass man, "and for that abolitionist Fillmore for Vice-President, too?"

"No," was the brief, emphatic answer.

"For whom, then?" asked an eager democrat, sparklingly.

"Old Zag Daylor," was again shortly answered.

"You are mad; Old Zack is only a candidate for President."

"Can'd helb id, bud wish I could. You see, by friends, I cad vode for hib for both, and thed Old Zag may dake whichever he wants, for by pard."

A general laugh from both parties followed the an-

nouncement of this unique conclusion, and Mr. Hardcase was universally turned over to offset the Hibernian admirer of Andhrew McJackson.

"And how is it with you?" said another, turning to the overseer, who stood close by, grinning from ear to ear.

"Oh! I am pretty much like the old man, only I took a sort o' shine to old Cass, too," was the reply; "I'll try and split the difference betwixt them in my vote."

"Better split your infernally thick skull!" was the smothered response from both parties.

"Well, my good madam," said a whig, addressing the old widow, mother of him who was soon to vote, "and how do you stand affected to the candidates?"

"Me?" asked the old lady, in reply; "O! I've taken a mighty yearning to Milly Fillmore there! He's a winsome, engagin' man, favored like my poor husband that's dead and gone. Bill shall vote for him, if he lives."

"Well, but about the others?"

"La me, gents! I'm sincerely jubous about *all* them gin'rals."

The parties, as the saying is, *vamosed.*

CHAPTER XI.

TRAITS OF NEGRO CHARACTER IN THE SOUTH.

How much is comprehended in the one word *slavery!* In the whole dictionary, no one word seems to strike the mind of a freeman with such holy abhorrence. Vice, depravity, degradation, infamy, meanness, covetousness, slander, and even infidelity and blasphemy, are all contemplated with far less of horror and disgust. Among the citizens of what are called the free States of our Union, which are formed of generations that have entirely forgotten the habits and business (in one sense, at least) of their worthy forefathers—and in Great Britain, the alma mater and progenitress of African slavery—a southern negro is regarded as a living deformity of vice and prostitution, a being with the shape of man, but lower in infamy than the brute; a member of the great human family, whose situation is so depraved and isolated, so impervious to all hopes of amelioration or of reformation, and so entirely cut off from sympathy with the human race, that all association with him is considered dangerous and contaminating. It is only with his persecutors and oppressors, as they are called, that the poor slave is held worthy of respect, of admiration, of confidence, of friendship. Yet the owners of slaves do not obtain credit for this. On the other hand, they are generally

held up in other States and countries as inhuman monsters, addicted to the worst of crimes, as delighting in barbarous practices and cruel punishments, and as the upholders of an institution opposed by the divine, the moral, and the natural law. I have been oftentimes amused, when a schoolboy, to find in my Olney's and Morse's Geography (excellent and useful books) the picture of slaves at work on a cotton or sugar plantation in the South, representing them as lean, broken-spirited, demure-looking creatures—the men without even shirts, and the women covered partly with a short bodice or tunic (sufficient only to protect the modesty of female students), whilst a lazy, sluggish, pampered overseer was seen in their midst flourishing an immense bludgeon, or wagon-whip, urging them to their tasks with a look of the most relentless ferocity. These plates are given to illustrate the mode of treating and working our slaves, and it seems to have been intended by the ingenious engraver to enforce the impression, so prevalent in the Northern States, that the Southern negro is half fed, half clothed, lifeless and spiritless in disposition, and that our overseers stand among them only to be amused now and then by applying the lash to the naked back of some grim, sulky fellow, or to the sleek legs of a tidy, "unadorned" slut of a negress. Now, to soothe the excited humanity of these horror-stricken artists, let me mention that I have seen many a group of grinning negro urchins and little merry-eyed black hussies, when accidentally engaged in looking over their young master's or mistress's school books of a Sunday morning (which is generally a time when all the negro children on the plantation feel at liberty to lurk and dodge around their

owner's mansion), and coming across a picture of this character, laugh heartily at their own ridiculous and contorted portraits, whilst some curious chap, more advanced in age, would chuckle to think that anybody in the world thought the cotton-field ever afforded such an exhibition. And so far from the overseer being placed there to gratify vindictiveness or indulge a heartless and brutal propensity, his duty is, like that of a schoolmaster whom we require to watch the studies of our children, to be always at his post, and in their midst when at labor, that, by observing their work, he may distinguish the careless from the careful, the lazy from the industrious, and protect the plant from the incautious and injurious use of tools, and thus prevent the *necessity* for using the lash. Without this constant presence of an overseer or foreman, the hopes of the planter would often be blasted, and the slave would fare incalculably worse.

But it is not my object, in this sketch, to defend slavery. Whether right or wrong, the opinions and sympathies of the whole civilized world are against us. In this respect, we stand as much isolated as the negroes themselves. I should be far more averse, however, to undertake a defence of our policy towards the Indians. The lot and condition of these unhappy and ill-fated people are far more deplorable than those of the Southern slaves. Our conduct, as respects right and justice, humanity and religion, is vastly more to be contemned and reprehended, when viewed in connection with our Indian policy, than in the other case. Of the Northern tribes scarcely any remain, whilst in the Southern States, acting upon the example of our Northern brethren, we are urging them further every day; and in a few years more a red man

will be a rare sight in the land of his inheritance. Even in the wild prairies and territories of the west, they are found to be in the way, and steps are being taken, and means prepared, to move them off towards the distant shores of the Pacific. The negroes, in like manner, are being constantly urged westward, and driven from State to State further South, from precisely the same heartless policy and un-christian motive, viz., they are found *to be in the way* of the grasping, enterprising Anglo-Saxon. The older and more settled a State becomes, the less use we have for these enslaved wanderers from Africa. This alone (and *not* obedience to any human or religious suggestion) has driven the Indian and the negro alike from Maine to Virginia, and now from Virginia through the Carolinas to Georgia and the South-western States; and the same principle, in process of time, will oust them from these; and so on until all must end, as De Tocqueville says, either in amalgamation or extermination.

There never has been a time, since the first British or Northern slavedealer kidnapped a poor, credulous African, that slaves have been so happy or so well treated as they are now in the Southern States of this Union.

Their natural affections are respected and encouraged with sedulous regard to their happiness, and their attachments as human beings fully developed and cultivated. Indeed, there is a species of attachment daily growing and increasing between the slaves and their masters' families, which will, I sometimes imagine, gain such firm hold and gather such strength as utterly to prevent the adoption of any plan having for its object the emancipation of the slaves, and, perhaps, result in the permanent and inalienable recognition of the institution. With the

majority of slaveholders this feeling far outweighs that of mere interest. I find a great many here who express a perfect willingness to supersede gradually slave labor; but I have seen very few who are willing to part with their slaves. They have been raised together; the associations and recollections of boyhood and early life all centre around the same scenes; in many instances, they may have matriculated at the same breast (for it is by no means uncommon, even in the highest classes, for black women to nurse their mistress's babe), and none but Southerners can understand or appreciate the peculiar sympathies which thus are generated betwixt the master and his slave. The present generation of Southerners are eminently the friends of the slaves, in every sense of the word, unless holding them in bondage be considered as dis-allied with such feeling. Of course, I do not mean to insinuate that this is universal. Not at all. As Chancellor Harper, in his most elegant essay on slavery, most aptly remarks: There are men whose natures are wayward and depraved, and who perpetrate the most atrocious and brutal cruelties on this unfortunate race. But these men, when properly known or exposed, are never countenanced in their neighborhood, and nothing nowadays is visited with more indignant and withering condemnation than harsh and mean treatment of slaves. Conscious fully of this agreeable and interesting fact, the slaves themselves are vastly improved in their moral and social habits. They are infinitely more docile under the yoke, and the best proof is offered in the fact that insurrections and revolts are almost out of date. The writer has lived for thirty years in the heart of populous slave countries, been with them under all circumstances, and

witnessed congregations of whole hundreds and thousands when scarcely fifty white men were in hearing distance, and has yet to see the time when such a thing was ever contemplated by the slaves, or seriously apprehended by the whites. There is hardly a planter in Mississippi, surrounded in some cases by a hundred or two of slaves, who closes his chamber doors or windows of a summer night; and many have not such a thing as a gun or defensive weapon about their houses. Wives and daughters, and sisters and mothers are frequently left without a male protector for days and weeks at a time, and yet our court records afford scarcely a case even of attempted insult or injury. Can any other country of the whole civilized world boast as much? What noble testimony in favor of the fidelity and chivalry of the Southern negro does such a fact afford! And yet it is strictly true, and without the shadow of exaggeration.

There is a certain planter in Mississippi who owns some hundred slaves, all of whom were born and raised in his own or his wife's family. He lived several miles from the county town, and was in the habit of going there frequently of a morning, and coming home at night. At such times he rode a fiery, high-mettled, and rather intractable horse, famous for its speed and spirit. Returning one evening rather later than usual, he was suddenly overtaken by a severe thunder-storm, and the cloud threatened to burst and disgorge its contents every moment. Under these circumstances, the planter halted with a hospitable neighbor, and concluded to spend the night rather than run the risk of getting wet. As he dismounted, an old negro received from his hands the bridle-rein of his frightened steed; but at that moment a loud clap

of thunder so increased its fright that the grasp of the groom was broken in an instant, and the fiery animal broke at full speed for home. About an hour afterwards, a faithful and valued young negro fellow, whose cabin was next to the road, was suddenly aroused by the familiar neighing of his master's favorite horse, which was coming at a tearing gallop up the lane in front. Opening his door, despite the fury of the storm, to see if all was right, at this late hour and under such circumstances with that master whom he loved more than any one else, the poor fellow was terribly alarmed to discover, as the horse passed at its reckless gait, that the rider was not in his seat. Filled with restless and eager apprehensions, the faithful boy rushed out with frantic speed, and seized the bridle of the horse as he stopped at the avenue gate. He then saw, further, to his dismay, that the saddle was missing, and the bridle broken in several places. He led the terrified animal to the stable, and went through the various slave-cabins to make known the alarming and melancholy news. It was received with quaking hearts and gloomy forebodings—for the master had been raised up in their midst, and most of them had loved him from boyhood. A consultation was held. The wife and sister were at the house, and already uneasy, though hoping that he had either not started from town, or, as was the case, had stopped on the way. The old family nurse and housekeeper declared it would be the height of imprudence to communicate the facts to the ladies; and most of the other servants, agreeing in this, thought it was best at least to make some inquiry and search during the night before arousing such torturing fears. But the boy Pompey (let us call him) dissented altoge-

ther, and announced his double resolve to set out through rain and storm to find his master, dead or alive, and to go straightway to his mistress with the appalling news, saying it was right she should know all. Finding that he was not to be dissuaded, the old nurse undertook to break the news to the ladies, from a kind intention that she might do so in such a manner as to keep alive some hope, though intending to make known all the facts. Whilst this was being done, Pompey and two other trusty determined fellows had mounted their mules, and, unbidden by overseer or any one, and totally regardless of the raging storm, set out on the forlorn and anxious search for their master. At the end of the lane, and bordering the plantation, was an immense, dreary swamp, watered by a large creek, which was now spread out over the whole bottom, and roaring and boiling in a frightful manner. The hearts of the devoted fellows sank within them as the thought flashed on their minds that their master had missed the bridges and causeway, and been swept off by the fierce current. Nothing daunted, they plunged in, resolving first to visit the various houses on the road to town; and, by dint of swimming and dangerous fording, succeeded, after considerable difficulty and delay, in crossing over. They aroused the inmates of several neighboring houses, and, hearing nothing of him they sought, had almost resolved to turn back and begin their perilous search in the deep waters of the swamp. But one of the number suggested, fortunately, that they should go one mile further to the house of an intimate friend of their master. Here they halloed lustily, and the owner of the premises appeared at the door of the gallery, and, finding who they were, declared the safety of their mas-

ter, and was in the act of closing the door. This did not at all suit the suspicious and anxious Pompey, who, fearing the old gentleman was merely trying to quiet their fears so that they might not further alarm their mistress, boldly demanded that they should be allowed to *see* their master, if indeed he *was* there. In this they were gratified, and then with numerous ludicrous expressions of delight, they declared their intention of returning forthwith to relieve the alarmed wife and sister. In vain their master forbade them to run such useless risk; they were not then to be controlled, though usually obedient to his every wish and command; and I have often heard both ladies describe Pompey as he appeared at their chamber-door, dripping with rain, and both rows of ivory shining joyously through the dark, to tell the successful and gratifying issue of his expedition.

This must be taken as an instance of genuine, disinterested devotion, illustrating powerfully the docility and innate warmth of heart peculiar to the Southern slaves when belonging, as the vast majority do, to kind and humane masters. No hope of freedom inspired, no thought of selfish reward suggested, the dangerous undertaking; and yet such instances of friendly interest are by no means rare. It is probable that nine-tenths of Southern planters could tell the same sort of story, as having occurred with themselves or some one of their neighbors.

I have heard a distinguished Southern statesman, now dead, relate a circumstance directly similar to the above as having occurred, on a trying occasion, with two of his own favored negroes. It was a delightful, calm summer evening, and the family had just taken an airing

around the environs of the city in their carriage. As they alighted on their return, the nurse, happening to meet them with the youngest child, a lovely little girl, in her arms, obtained permission to ride out a short distance to amuse the infant. No one else went, as the horses were thought to be perfectly gentle, and as all confidence was placed in the driver's care and skill. But it happened, in descending a steep hill which arose beyond the river on which the little city was situated, that a breast-chain broke, and the carriage being pushed suddenly upon the horses, they started off at a furious gait, and evidently in a fright. The bridge was to be passed, and the faithful driver, more alarmed for their precious charge than himself, shouted to the nurse with trembling voice that he had lost all control over his horses. The honest creature did not hesitate, but took her resolve in a moment. With wonderful self-possession, which could have been inspired by nothing short of her devotion to her owners and their beloved offspring, and as the only possible chance, she hastily unfastened the door, and then turning so as to make sure of alighting on her back, at the same time holding the infant at arms' length above her that it might thus escape the slightest jar, she threw herself out with a spring, perfectly regardless of everything but the safety of her master's child. Her plan succeeded; for several gentlemen who witnessed the whole affair, running up to her aid immediately, discovered that the infant was entirely unhurt, though the devoted nurse had sustained severe injury. Fortunately, the horses were stopped in time to prevent any serious accident; and afterwards, when the same gentlemen called to congratulate the distinguished father on his child's escape,

they declared to him that he possessed a treasure of priceless value in this devoted nurse—a fact of which he was, by the by, fully aware.

Now it would be difficult to match either of the above instances by detailing similar acts of considerate devotion in connection with hired servants, whose bonds of affection are altogether of a different nature, and are cultivated only in proportion to the wages they receive. In England or France, where servants, in some cases, are retained for long generations in the same families, such cases may, and do sometimes occur; but it must be recollected that the one is a slave, and the other a freeman —the first purely and entirely disinterested; the other the recipient of yearly wages, and capable from birth of being promoted to a higher and more respectable sphere. This difference is vital, and leaves a large and highly honorable balance in favor of the poor bondman.

In times of fire on the plantations, or in the towns and cities, none work with such fearless energy, or labor with such indomitable zeal, as the slaves. The more daring and full of danger the feat to be performed, the more eager do they become to undertake and accomplish it. Their exertions on such occasions to save houses and property in which they have not the slightest interest are sometimes of such extraordinary character as almost to amount to a species of rabid and contagious frenzy. And yet a kind look or expression, a word of praise, or perhaps a glass of spirits, is all the reward they ever desire or look for, and with either of these they go away more than satisfied, whilst public thanks, and big dinners, and convivial, complimentary wine suppers fall to the lot and flatter the pride of their white co-laborers.

Many years ago the capitol of one of our sovereign States* was saved, as was then universally conceded, only by the reckless efforts and unterrified constancy of a brave-hearted slave. In this instance, indeed, the legislature, then in session, offered to buy and set free the saviour of the splendid building in which the whole archives and records of the State were deposited; but the slave himself, I believe, refused to be made the recipient of their bounty, preferring to remain with a master whom he loved rather than obtain his liberty by forever expatriating himself. A deed like this would do honor to the memory of a Fabricius, a Manlius, or of the Decii themselves; and the records of those ancient days, when patriotism was evidenced by the most devoted oblations, afforded no such strong and admirable instance of *pure* disinterestedness.

In addition to these admirable traits of single-heartedness and devotion, illustrations of which might be indefinitely extended and multiplied, the Southern negro inherits a disposition unusually cheerful and buoyant, is gifted with a fine imagination, and, as a general thing, delights in the marvelous or supernatural. Care never wrinkles the slaves' brow, and even when grief assails them (as sometimes it does in the most excruciating of all ways), their natural impulsiveness and vivacity soon enable them to subdue and forget it. With regard to their inventive powers or lively creations of fancy, I have only to suggest those simple tales of the nursery and dining-room, to conjure up whole hosts of fond and cherished associations of boyhood's bright days to the mind

* Georgia.

of every Southern reader, and which afford the most acceptable testimony of the fact. They weave the most agreeable and interesting stories in connection with the more harmless tenants of our Southern forests; not Father Æsop himself was ever able to concoct more quaint and fanciful little fables about opossums, foxes, rabbits, and racoons than these merry-souled creatures. Not a hollow stump, or stooping tree, or bubbling spring, or rippling stream for miles around the country, but what they can clothe with a species of interest that, with loftier minds, and in other countries, may have opened exhaustless veins of genuine romance.

But it is in the awful and the marvelous that they most delight, and in which they so greatly excel. Their religion is the effect of enthusiasm actively excited by a picture of woe or suffering, or a prospect of inviting comfort and happiness. If they could be believed with safety in matters of religious testimony, it might be justly argued that the days of miracles, and strange sights, and supernatural warnings, and social intercourse between the chosen on earth and the saints in glory, are not passed away by a long jump. It is not at all uncommon for an evangelist or an angel to call down, and, taking a score or two of them by the hand, lead them to some high mountain, where the whole army of heaven may be seen drawn out to meet the prince of darkness. They hear every order given during the battle, the shock of arms, the most awful roar of artillery, and groans and lamentations enough to drown more than all that ever came from Rama. They confidently believe (that is, the greater part of them) that it is only at the point of the bayonet that our Saviour can keep down Satan and

his legions, which is very natural, considering that they have not sufficient education to distinguish betwixt figures of speech and real matters of fact. Hence they most generally choose to construe what sermons they hear quite literally; and as battle and its roar, its toil and its suffering, are favorite topics of illustration with all preachers, they very charitably conclude that they are listening to plain, unvarnished, downright truth. They often give in, as their religious experience, tales of wonder and imaginative beauty that bear the impress almost of insanity, and which would astonish the most gifted of fictitious writers. If they are checked in these supernatural flights and alluring mental vagaries, and brought down suddenly to the sober realities and substantial requirements of religion, they are most apt to surrender all their Christianity. It has no longer any charms for their warm and active imaginations, when divested of this hallucinary garb. With a view, I suppose, to induce the grand and desirable end of religious toil, by encouraging so happy a delusion, this pious lying is considerately winked at even by good and intelligent men, who denominate it the adaptability of the Christian system. Exaggeration, which is the child of enthusiasm and credulity, comes as natural to negroes as the breath of life; and hence they claim full indulgence as concerns their spiritual affairs and experience; nor do I see how they can well be restricted. Greater latitude is required, and must, of necessity, be allowed.

But it is in the way of ghosts, and goblins, and phantoms, that the Southern negroes find a full community of thought and belief. On this point not a dissenter is to be found; and I have discovered that the Gospel rather

tends to confirm and increase this amiable weakness than to suppress and eradicate it. This, too, is quite explicable, as they hear much, in the Old Testament especially, of ghosts and witches; and being told that God is the same in all ages, and that he never changes, they cannot see why there should not be ghosts and witches in their day and time as well as in the days of Saul and Samuel. But their superstition does not end here. The howl of a dog, the note of a whippowil, the screech of the small swamp owl, inspire them at all times with awe and solemn forebodings of evil shortly to come; and the accidental, ticking noise of a little death-watch,* at their bed's head of a night, sounds in their ears like a funeral knell. The flight of birds after night, is regarded by them as a bad omen; and the sudden appearance of a will-o'-the-wisp strikes them oftentimes with the most ludicrous terror. Taking advantage of this credulity, the Southern boys, in almost every family, are in the habit of amusing themselves by playing many a mischievous prank on the simple creatures, although it sometimes happens that the tables are turned quite unexpectedly, for it is a matter of most serious belief even among the best and most intelligent slaves. I heard a distinguished gentleman of Georgia, now no more, relate a very touching little incident which occurred with himself in this connection. His father owned a fine, honest, and trusty old fellow, whose religious sincerity was never called in question, and who was noted for the warmth of his attachment to both his master and mistress. Whilst the gentleman alluded to was yet very young, he had the

* A species of small bug.

misfortune to lose his mother, and one dark night, not long after the sad event, he conceived a project of frightening his father's old servant, who was well known to believe in ghosts. So, wrapping himself in a long, flowing sheet, and disguising his features with a false-face made of white paper, he took the path to the cabin in which the negroes lived. Most of them had gone to their rest, but the old fellow himself was standing in a melancholy, reflective attitude, before the fire, which was now very nearly burnt down. Creeping noiselessly to the door, he suddenly presented himself, in his grave-like habiliments, before the astonished servant, who, as it happened, so far from betraying the least symptom of fright, burst into tears, and holding both hands imploringly towards the supposed spirit, exclaimed, in woeful accents, "Ah, there's my poor, dear mistress!" This was an effect very far different from what had been anticipated, and being totally unprepared for so touching an appeal, and having thought of anything else than personating his deceased parent, the tender-hearted youth threw off his disguise, asked the affectionate old negro's pardon, and mingled his own tears freely with those of his humble friend.

The dialect of the negro is another and striking peculiarity of character, and one which often affords much amusement. But, at the same time, I have been much diverted to find our tale-tellers and novel-writers concocting a sort of disjointed, incongruous, unintelligible jargon for their negro characters, something more like the style of talk among any other people than our Southern negroes. This might be naturally expected from Northern writers, who, some how, imagine that these

people still converse in the broken language of the native African; but it is astonishing that even gentlemen born and raised in their midst should have fallen into the same error. For instance, I have met with the following in an old file of a certain Southern journal (now defunct), by a nameless author, though, it is to be presumed, of Southern birth:—

"Ky ole maussa! you gon fule me ater all! When young mass cummin een place? I yerree-ee ride hoss fur kill!"

"Ees maussa! obshaa, him say, cause me gon cut me medjure half inch too short—him no care a dam!—enty dat de cuss?"

Now, it strikes me, with all due deference to this nameless and talented author, that either of the above sentences read out to one of our plantation negroes would be hardly less unintelligible to him than Choctaw or Congo. There are words, and tortured pronunciations, and exclamations, which no Southern negro ever uses, and a raw African would scarcely make so bad an attempt, although they are *taught* to speak a tongue something like the above from just the same notion that causes parents to clothe infant thoughts with outlandish jargon. The savages in De Foe's story of Robinson Crusoe are made to talk in the same unnatural and distorted English, and hence, I suppose, the idea of giving to our negroes the language quoted above. Our most distinguished Northern writers resort to the same fanciful vocabulary when they introduce the negro in their works of fiction. But it is wholly different from their modes of expression; and these remarks being intended solely for

explanation, I have ventured to use the above to illustrate, by no means to criticize.

That the negroes mispronounce and misuse words most ludicrously is very true; but they rarely indulge the *artless* and perverted lingo so usually put in their mouths by the novel-writers. Their *real* and natural manner of talking and expressing their ideas is truly laughable, because of their attempts at pompous and precise declamation, not from their distorted tone and unnatural gibberish; and this fact has been aptly turned to advantage by the strolling banjo players and Ethiopian singers, who so often divert their audiences with genuine specimens of the negro manner and dialect.

The late Hon. William H. Crawford, so affectionately and proudly remembered by all Georgians, owned four native Africans, brought to this country among the last importations of those unfortunate wretches who could be sold within the time prescribed by the Federal Constitution. Their names were quite remarkable, and formed a rude jingle when pronounced consecutively, not unpleasant to be heard. They were called thus, "Capity, Saminy, Quominy, Quor." In the same neighborhood, there happened to be residing another native African, rather more Americanized than the first, and these five old fellows, especially as some of them bore on their faces the strange scars inflicted for some unknown distinguishing purpose in their native country, were treated with marked respect by all the other negroes for miles and miles around. It was easy to detect, in this filial and superstitious reverence for genuine, unadulterated sons of their common native soil, the origin of that obedience to the supposed servants of Obi, and other Afri-

can idols, which holds good at this day among the slaves and negroes in the West Indies and South America. Their illustrious owner himself always treated them with rather more kindness of manner and respect than his other slaves, and would never allow them to be subjected to the lash except in case of downright resistance to the authority of his overseer (and this was a fault with them occasionally), and even then with manifest reluctance, and only from imperative convictions of duty. Their habits and dispositions were as unlike those of our native negroes as it is possible to conceive, when it is considered that they are the same race. They had none of that merry-heartedness and vivacity which I have elsewhere pictured as a trait of our Southern negroes, and, though not decidedly morose, or fractious, they were yet exclusive, and somewhat unapproachable. They required far less whipping to coerce attention to their tasks; indeed, they worked with remarkable diligence, and it was only in case of a misunderstanding about some matter of business betwixt them and the overseer that they ever became refractory, or were brought under the lash. On the other hand, our Southern negroes rarely ever resist (though now and then they runaway when frightened by overseers freshly employed), but they are generally indolent and careless if they are allowed to think that whipping will not be resorted to. I never knew a native African to runaway from his master's plantation. They stand their ground doggedly, like the Roman or British soldier, regardless of consequences; and to carry out the simile, they often fight with the same determined courage, unhappily for them!

I resided, when a boy, for several years in the family

of a near relative whose estate joined that of Mr. Crawford, and was often a visitor at Woodlawn. With the simple curiosity of childhood, and being always fond of out-of-the-way gleanings, it was a favorite pastime with me, whilst my cousins and schoolmates were engaged with their usual diversions, to hunt up these old Africans, and gather their stories of their native clime. The most favorable time for this was on Sundays, when their countryman and comrade, old Dick, who belonged to a different plantation, would come over to spend the day with them. I have sat for whole hours of a summer day under the shade of a spreading oak, or by the cheerful fire of their rude and homely ingle-sides when in winter, and listened with intense delight to the history of the fierce wars which had raged between hostile princes in their native country, or to some dangerous and interesting personal adventure with wild animals of the desert or forest. The scene was rendered doubly interesting when a company of our native born negroes would chance to call in, for then their staring eyes, open mouths, and peculiarly respectful attitudes would always provoke my risible indulgences. Sometimes, on these occasions, the old Africans would become so completely absorbed in their own narratives, or so carried away by early grateful recollections, that they would involuntarily slide into the dialect, or rather *lingo* of their native country, and, totally forgetful of my ignorance, or that they were talking for my gratification, continue to jabber away for hours at a time. At the close of such conversations, as was always their way, they would rise, one after another, and walk silently off for some considerable distance; though it was scarcely ever more than five or ten minutes

before they reassembled. Old Dick, who had a wife in my uncle's negro family, and with whom, in consequence, I was much better acquainted than the rest, took especial pleasure in teaching me the African numerical count; and as, notwithstanding that many tourists have gleaned that of the various Indian tribes of the country, it is most likely that no other person has felt sufficient interest to gather and recollect that of this proscribed and degraded race, I will here venture to write down for my reader's curiosity this chance-gathering of my early boyhood. Their count, which, like that of all the aboriginal tribes with which I am acquainted, extends to the magic number of ten only, is as follows: "Kelleh, fullah, subah, nanni, lolo, waulo, oolulah, suggah, conontah, tah." I presume this is the first time that these words were ever written down, at least in a civilized or Christian tongue, and this fact, if no other, may procure me the reader's pardon for their introduction. One cannot fail to perceive that the syllabic terminations, as well as the conformation of the words themselves, are wholly different from those peculiar to the language of the Indian, or from any other savage *lingo;* while there is a smoothness in the succession and flow of the numbers which might argue a faint poetic touch even with these barbarous heathens. I cannot find that any Indian modes of counting run so smoothly together; they are rather uniformly harsh and unharmonious. The curious reader will, perhaps, indulge an illustration of this, as the point of inquiry possesses certainly the rare merit of novelty, if not of utility.

In the antiquated history of Virginia by the celebrated Capt. John Smith, of Pocahontas memory (more recently signalized and consigned to standard history by the clas-

sic pen of Wm. Gilmore Simms), we find the following authentic record of the count used by the Powhatan Indians, and which, as it had no connection with Smith's personal adventures, Mr. Simms does not append to his elegant and useful biography of the British hero. I select this count because, unlike that of the African, and most Indian tribes too, I find it written and preserved; and I introduce it only to give my courteous reader a fair opportunity to compare the two. They stop also at ten, and their numbers are these: "Necut, ningle, nuss, yowgh, parauske, cummotinch, tuppawoss, nusswash, kekatawgh, kaskekee." Here are all the harshness and abruptness of the Indian mode of talking, with little or no pretension to smoothness and harmony of sound. The genius of Cooper, and the graphic sketches of that first of American writers, Washington Irving, have thrown around the Indian character a halo of romantic and poetic interest which no other savage race has been fortunate enough to elicit. The characters and scenes of their works, however, belong to a past age; and a century of contact with the white man has either totally changed and corrupted the Indian nature, or else the genius and imagination of these fathers of our literature have been suffered to ramble with that unrestricted liberty which Horace, in his "Ars Poetica," emphatically claims for poets and painters. The Indians of our day, besides having a full share of all the lower and degrading vices of the Southern negro, such as stealing, lying, and filthy tastes, are noted for cowardice, and craft, and meanness of every description. They possess not, so far as my observation and experience go, a single admirable virtue, or magnanimous or noble quality of heart or mind.

The Southern slave, much more the native, free-born African, is his superior in every sense of the word ; and although slaves for life, and begetting slaves, I do not know a negro that would countenance an exchange of situations with a Choctaw or Chickasaw Indian. As a general thing, these are hardly above the animals.

I take the liberty of reminding my reader of these facts, because it may appear, at first sight, somewhat hazardous to attempt throwing any interest of a romantic character over the despised sons of Libya. Who knows, however, that the banks of the Gambia, the Senegal, the Niger, and the wilds of Nigritia, and the luckless regions of Congo and Guinea, might not afford, if called with a view to storied interest, more than mere *shadowy* foundations for romance! Suppose we picture to ourselves a rude but cheerful-looking hut beneath the fierce sun and the cloudless sky of ill-fated Guinea, filled with a happy family, and surrounded with the simple and rude embellishments of native taste. The father has gone in the forest to hunt the lion ; the mother is absent on some domestic errand. They have left their little children to the care only of an elder daughter, and perhaps she, unsuspicious and confiding creature, has availed herself of this temporary absence of her watchful parents to admit some dark-skinned but devoted lover to her embraces in this green-sheltered cot. Dreaming not of danger, but absorbed with the glowing fervor and kindling emotions of those tender passions which, gathering in that burning realm tenfold intensity, and unbridled by the cold and withering formalities of less exciting climes, disdain the trammels of refined society, these beings of Nature's mould abandon themselves to

all the delights of such a scene. But the spoiler has been watching his prey and patiently abiding his time; the opportunity for his accursed work is at hand; a slave-dealer rushes suddenly upon them to convert their love-dreams into an earthly hell; they are seized and ruthlessly fettered; the scourge is applied; they yield to fate, and, with breaking hearts, breathe an eternal adieu to happy homes and loved scenes. Then the waste around rings with a piercing scream; the mother has come in time to behold the fate of her children; she rushes forward with frantic gait, and, with well-timed *humanity*, the ravagers stop to receive her as an accession to their *profitable* day's work! At night, the father returns to find his home desolate and abandoned, and his happiness fled forever. The caress of his wife, the smiles of his children, will welcome him no more. Whose is the heart that sickens not at the sad recital? Whose the mind that revolts not when contemplating the awful picture? Humanity weeps at the reflection, and civilization shrinks; *religion* hangs its head in shame and confusion! Yet it is not uncommon to find traditions of this character preserved in the families of the African descendants. I have seen lusty-looking, cheerful-hearted fellows toiling with zeal and alacrity at their daily tasks, who would laughingly boast that the blood of royalty flowed through their veins, and there was no doubt of the fact. The negro is degraded and enslaved; else romance, startling, thrilling, and soul-reaching, might be gathered from sources like these.

They who now find their chief delight in fulminating anathemas and maledictions against the friends of domestic slavery should bear in mind, as honorable testimony

in our favor, that the grand *original* sin belongs, and must be visited, elsewhere. The South demurs to all responsibility, and her escutcheon is stainless on this point. The most zealous and efficient opponents of the abominable and unchristian traffic have been found in the South. Indeed, it is a fact as creditable as it is indisputable that slave-dealing ships have been rarely fitted out from a Southern port, and never manned by a Southern crew. But I must check a pen which wanders to an unwitting, and perhaps unwelcome, digression.

Another and most anomalous trait in the character of Southern negroes is that, whilst utterly impervious to all keen sense of moral restraint and obligation in their habits and intercourse, they are not sensible of any consequent debasement. They lie, and steal, and commingle indiscriminately, and without feeling that they violate any divine or moral law, or lose any considerable ground in the estimation of their owners. After they have answered for the offence, when detected and convicted, they consider full expiation to have been made, and, claiming alike forgetfulness and forgiveness, return to the midst of their fellows none the more depressed because of the crime. The fear of punishment alone restrains them in such cases, and the only mortification they experience is the consciousness of being at loggerheads with their master or overseer. For these crimes among slaves our statutes call for no judicial interference, and affix no penalty for their commission, except when burglary or highway robbery is alleged in conjunction with the other offences. In this case, the law throws around them the same generous protection which is yielded to the white man. All capi-

tal offences are answerable by the slave to the same tribunal and in the same way as any other person. Of course, though, a slave cannot be held in law as capable of committing either adultery or *crim. con.;* and we have the very high authority of Judge Harper that the mere *theft* of a slave is no offence against society, and is almost undefinable.

This laxity of morals among Southern slaves results as well from their negro temperament as from their state of bondage. But it is not confined to Southern slaves. In other countries, where the *curse* (as it is called) of slavery does not exist, the records of crime are tenfold more numerous. Very rarely is it that *our* courts are ever called to take cognizance of petty larcenies, when compared with the records of those in the free States of the North, or in Europe ; whereas, in the case of virtue among females, no country under the sun is so blessed as the South. The existence of a class of females who set little value on chastity, and afford easy gratification to the licentious desires of men who belong to a higher caste, in addition to the absence of all temptation, accounts for this unparalleled purity and abstinence among the lower classes of Southern females. As regards our higher and polished circles, I have yet to see or hear the first insinuation thrown out or the first charge brought. Their pre-eminence is conceded.

I have heard the story of a young milliner lady who happened to employ, on the same day, two assistant females—one a white girl freshly arrived, and the other a mulatto negress. Two weeks had not passed before it was discovered that the first was a regular courtezan,

who received every night visits from her favored gallants. At the same time, it was equally well known that the slave girl placed little or no restraint on her amorous inclinations, as she was already the mother of offspring whose paternity could not easily have been determined. The former was at once paid off and peremptorily discharged. In vain she endeavored to extenuate her own by instancing the exceptionable conduct of the negress, who was still to be retained. The case was widely different. One had character to lose, and deprecated detection; she knew the direful punishment with which society visited her crime, and this very knowledge rendered her an unfit companion for respectable females of her own class and complexion. The other belonged to a degraded class—degraded in the eyes of the whole world, and consequently was never possessed of character, as defined strictly; she cared nothing about detection, and felt conscious less of crime than of a natural and constitutional weakness; she was far less contaminated and depraved in every sense; her offspring was not a reproach or burden to society; and she had done no great injury to herself or to any other human being.

This may seem anomalous, but, as Judge Harper remarks, it is a distinction habitually made, and is founded on the unerring instinct of nature. There are some instances, however (far more than infuriated opponents of the South generally imagine), where slaves preserve a perfectly virtuous conduct and practice a rigid morality. Choosing, however, in portraying faithfully the traits of negro character (if I may use the last term in this connection), rather to admit candidly and fully, than attempt to palliate or defend the evil, I must

reaffirm what I have elsewhere declared, viz., that the Southern negroes, as a class or body, are utterly destitute of moral perception and obedience, and that such is inseparable from a state of absolute slavery.

I believe that it would be impolitic and unsafe to attempt any extended or liberal reformation of this evil. Education is the only remedy, and this with slaves is wholly out of the question. They have the Gospel preached to them—missionaries (not incendiaries) have free access to their quarters, and receive compensation from the owners; they are excluded from no church or place of divine worship which is frequented by the whites. But this does not by any means reach the evil, and beyond making them more social and contented, I am unable, as yet, to see that any great good results. The institution is strictly a political one. I find that its advocates (with rare exceptions) will maintain fully their *rights* on this ground. As to its morality, I do not consider the question to be open. It has been closed by the acts of the civilized world. If it be a sin or moral wrong, it cannot be rebuked except by stainless hands. The abolitionist and slavery propagandist—Old as well as New England—Europe as well as America—have all participated in the guilt; and, inasmuch as it has now become a thoroughly domestic institution, their descendants should not quarrel about its right. An evil which necessity alone governs must work its own cure, and it must disappear from the South, if it disappear at all, just as it disappeared from the North—by the inevitable laws of population, and the grasping enterprise of a more enlightened race.

This is a sketch, and not an argument. The candid reader will perceive that I have (even in digressions

which could not well have been left out) touched the subject more as a *Rambler* than an essayist. I have written just as I thought, with no desire to promulgate my opinions as authority, or as an index to those generally entertained in my native sunny clime. Whatever may be my biases as a Southron, or my views of the naked question in dispute between sections of this Union, I have abstained studiously from all allusion to them in this place.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BRIDE OF LICK-THE-SKILLET.

The south-eastern corner of N———e county, in Mississippi, is a broken and rugged country, generally poor and unproductive, and peopled by a plain, honest, straightforward sort of folks, who glory more in the simple abundance by which they are surrounded than in any pretensions to high and stylish living. In the midst of this wild and mountainous region, on the head waters of Running Water Creek, which, flowing for some distance through a succession of hills and vales, strikes at last a fruitful land, and empties itself into the principal stream which divides the county—and in a narrow gorge or dell, between two high mountains, dwelt an honest plain old gentleman who was known as Mr. Peter Pomroy. The situation was isolated and remarkably picturesque, combining the quiet prospect of winding valleys, watered by rivulets of the greenest hue from the reflection of the various trees above and around, and the more grand and inspiring spectacle of mountains crowned with verdant shrubbery, from whose lofty summits might be seen nearly the entire plain of the upper Bigbee. The dwelling was constructed of hewed logs, like that of all his neighbors (except that his own was rather more comfortable); and, without claiming the least pretension even to moderate wealth, Mr. Pomroy

was yet independent in his circumstances, hospitable and open-hearted in his way of living, and, as the saying is, well to do in the world every way. The farmers of the country around were not generally so blessed ; they were poor and sometimes dependent—genuine country bumpkins in their manners and customs, careless in dress, rough in appearance, and, though eminently harmless and good natured, yet extremely rude and uncouth in their intercourse with strangers, or with one another. From these facts, as I infer, the name of Lick-the-skillet was given to their district; and, whether bestowed in derision or waggishness, as it comported with their ways and views to the very notch, it was readily accepted by the citizens, and the district became so designated throughout all the county. So much, then, for names!

At the distance of a few paces only from his humble dwelling, stood Mr. Pomroy's saw and grist-mill, a low one-story building, on the edge of a steep dam formed of trunks of trees and large rocks, over which the water roared and dashed like a cataract, filling the woods around with a continuous sound not unpleasant to the ear on a still summer evening, and gently relieving the sombre silence of the scene. The building was the only framed tenement in the country, and had been erected several years before by an enterprising old Dutchman, who doubtless would have made his fortune at sawing and grinding for the people of Lick-the-skillet, if death had not called for him, and removed him from the scene of his earthly labors, about a year after he had finished his mill. It now looked quite craggy and antiquated, and was covered over with a sort of darkish-gray furze, which gave it an aspect of venerable age. As

Mynheer Von Tromp had died before paying the present owner either for the land or site, or for some two years' bed and board, it fell out, of consequence, that Mr. Peter Pomroy claimed the whole effects of the Dutchman's ingenuity and labor as his own; and, as there was none to dispute either the right or justice of the proceeding, it was whispered that the old architect's death had been, as the neighbors said, a perfect windfall and God-send for his lucky creditor. At all events, it was very well known that the old gentleman had nearly doubled his means since he had been undisputed owner of the mill; and, as the said mill is destined to become quite prominent in the development of this legend, it is thought that a more detailed description of its luckless constructor, and of its own appearance and situation, may be quite necessary.

The old millwright was a stout, chubby, round-bellied Dutchman of the genuine faderland stamp, with a face like the full moon, and eyes so small and smothered up in fat that it was a wonder with many how he managed to squeeze enough sight through this barricade of flesh and blood to carry on his work in a manner so neat and expeditious. He was remarkably industrious and cheerful, sang some old snatch of a German air all the time he labored, though it was seldom he entered into or encouraged lengthened conversation with his numerous and inquisitive visitors. This may have proceeded and doubtless did proceed from two of the very best of causes, viz., he was too frugal and industrious to waste his time in idle talk, and, what was more, he spoke the English language very imperfectly and unintelligibly. The old fellow was wholly absorbed with his plan of turning his

time and labor to thrifty account, worked incessantly from sunrise until sunset, never left home during the whole two years that he lived with Mr. Pomroy, except on Sundays, when, instead of going to meeting, he invariably hunted game all day. This gave very considerable offence to the hard-shell people of Lick-the-skillet, many of whom boldly predicted that he could never come to any good or Christian end. Now, whether this sage and charitable prophecy contributed at all towards inducing the melancholy and strange accident which, in the end, brought about the death of Mynheer Von Tromp, it does not avail me to say; but certain it is that it came literally to pass as to the first part, for he surely came to a very bad, though I feel no authority to characterize it as an unchristian, end.

During the time that the mynheer resided in Lick-the-skillet, he showed no especial favor or liking to any persons except the pretty little daughter of his worthy host, and a wild, harum-scarum, rumpusing blade who set up for being a doctor, though more akin, as many said, to old Nick than to Galen, and who was known through the neighborhood by the familiar name of Hop Hubbub. For these two, the old Dutchman always had a kind word and a merry welcome; and Hop and he were wont to smoke many a pipe together in the mill-house, and revel of winter nights over many a steaming and savory whisky stew, for both loved a cup over-well for their good. After the mill-house was covered over, old Von Tromp, with true Dutch providence, fitted off a nice little room at one of the corners, separated from the main room by a substantial sealed and weather-boarded partition, built a genuine broad and capacious Dutch chimney on one side

of it, and made the same his sleeping apartment. Here it was that he received and entertained Hop, and being too far away to disturb the quiet of Mr. Pomroy's household, they would spend whole nights singing and drinking, never seeming to care a groat about sleep; for, at the first dawn of light, the clatter of the mill was heard always to break the stillness of the early morning, whilst Hop, at the same time, would mount his steed and scamper off at a reckless gait towards the village in which he dwelt.

Things went on in this way, as I have said, for nearly a twelvemonth, when, one morning in the Christmas holidays, the family waked and dressed without hearing any stir or noise at the mill-house, and when breakfast came in, old Von Tromp was not at his accustomed place. As he was famous for the most rigid regularity and promptness, these two circumstances gave Mr. Pomroy and his family some considerable uneasiness, and the worthy gentleman had scarce swallowed more than half of his usual allowance before he took his hat and cane, and hurried off to find what was the matter with his friend and boarder. Arriving at the mill, he found the door of the honest Dutchman's little apartment wide open, the bed tumbled and pressed as though its occupant had passed the night as usual; but no sign of clothes or of old Von Tromp was to be seen anywhere about. This seriously alarmed him, and the worthy host began to retrace his steps homeward, with a view to procure aid and institute a more extended search. He had reached the doorway, and was in the act of stepping forth, when his eye fell accidentally upon a dark-looking object underneath the mill, just at the foot of the race. This sug-

gested an alarming idea. Immediately above, a cavity had been left in the floor, of a size fully sufficient for a large man to fall through, which Hans Von Tromp had arranged on purpose that he might always witness the first dash of the waters as they rushed from the gap against the fly-wheel, and set his darling machinery in motion. No one knew better than Mr. Pomroy that the honest Dutchman had his mood of melancholy, or the blues, especially when deep in his cups; and as Hans had indulged more freely than usual in egg-nog and whisky stews the night before, Mr. Pomroy felt a most awful conviction run through his brain. He descended, and found the dark object to be what he had already anticipated, the familiar broad-brimmed hat of the hapless Von Tromp. Where now was the owner? Had he drowned himself? These were solemn questions, and the worthy host sadly misgave their answers. He returned, and summoned two negro fellows belonging to his farm. With these he dragged the race, and in the course of fifteen minutes they drew forth the portly carcass of the old millwright. The neighbors were called together, and among them came Hop Hubbub, the only intimate companion of the deceased. Hop was a sadly wicked fellow, and not a little humorous withal; and when he cast his roguish eyes upon the swelled and distorted form of his ancient comrade, so far from showing the least tearful symptom of sorrow, the bystanders were taken all aback to see him curl his lips into a singular sort of smile, peculiar to himself, expressive alike of droll mirth and lurking mischief. Tumbling the body to and fro, pressing the abdomen and bowels, so as to make the water inside roar and gurgle in a manner the most shock-

ing, even to the hardened nerves of the rough sons of Lick-the-skillet, he gave, as his settled opinion, that the fierce old trout (as he called Hans always) had mustered up an extraordinary supply of Dutch courage, whilst drunk the night before, had doubtless raised the d——l in person (which he solemnly averred every German could do when he chose, as they all dealt in the infernal sciences), rashly challenged him to a wrestling match, and that Old Nick had gone off conqueror. In proof of these wise conclusions, Hop pointed mysteriously to a blackened appearance about the throat of the deceased, shook his head ruefully, and, having suddenly exchanged his smile for a look the most portentous and knowing, succeeded in impressing his opinion on the minds of his simple and credulous hearers. The next thing was to bury the dead, and here again Hop interfered. He declared that he had often heard the old Dutchman say, in his lifetime, that, in case he died whilst at Lick-the-skillet, it was his ardent desire to be interred under his mill-house; and as the *Old Boy* had now carried him off before his time, he proposed that the body should be deposited in a shallow grave at the foot of the race, where its hapless soul had been wrested from it, so that, in case Hans should ever get a little respite from his burning resting-place below, he might easily find the way back to his favorite earthly haunts. Hop's opinion was gospel authority on all incidental matters at Lick-the-skillet, and as there was no good reason to the contrary, his suggestions were promptly adopted; and honest Hans Von Tromp was decently buried on the spot where he had yielded up his life, and where his grave might be forever freshened by the spray of that waterfall whose roar had

been to him the most delightful sound on earth. His little female favorite reverently cherished the memory of that friendly interest and regard which Hans had ever showed for her during life; and now that he was gone, she visited his grave, over which she strewed the violet and wild rose, to mingle with the moss and grass which carpeted its mound.

Years followed after years, and rolled away, and, in the mean time, whilst Mr. Pomroy was moulding the dollars by old Hans Von Tromp's mill, his daughter Sophronia, or Sophie, as she was called by the neighbors, had shot up into a nice, buxom, blooming girl of seventeen. Confined mostly to her native shaded vale, and fanned only by the cool mountain breeze, her complexion was fairer than the lily, and her cheeks as red as the roses which blushed from amidst her mother's rude, but tasteful trellis-work. She was a wild, wilful romp of a piece, and threaded the winding dells, or scaled the steep mountain crags like any lusty-legged ploughboy or dare-devil huntsman. There was no controlling her inclinations. She fished whenever or wherever she pleased, and with anybody, male or female, just as she chose; and it took a strong arm and stout lungs to beat her in a swimming-race up or down the mill-pond. Such were her primitive habits and artless demeanor that she never refused to enter into a contest of this sort with any beau or rustic suitor who might be paying his court at the shrine of her beauty; only she annexed, as an inviolable stipulation, that her competitor should lie concealed and blindfolded until she had covered her charms beneath the surface of the green waves around, and maintain a respectful distance during the race. To violate either of

these was to incur Sophie's lasting displeasure, and the prompt dismissal of the offending party. But, unlike the racing damsel mentioned in classic history, she exacted no penalty in case of defeat, and promised no reward to her successful competitor beyond a simple acknowledgment on her part of his superior prowess. In all these wanton sports and wanderings, Sophie was more often accompanied by Dr. Hop Hubbub than any one else, and it was generally whispered, in consequence, that he was to become finally lord of that beauty and those charms which ran half the young sparks in Lick-the-skillet almost distracted whenever they successively engaged with her in the diversion of swimming or muscadine hunting. Whenever she lifted her petticoats to keep from wetting them whilst wading through some shallow mountain brook, in her rambling excursions, she generally gave Hop the preference in carrying over her shoes and stockings, and would only playfully slap at him when he attempted to snatch a kiss from her coral lips, or ventured a sly caress of her plump but soft form. But it was dangerous for another gentleman to hazard a like experiment, for Sophie never hesitated to use her fishing-pole or riding-switch vigorously and effectively, when occasion required. In the merry country reel or exciting jig, in jumping the grape-vine, or playing at prisoner's base of moonlight nights, Hop was always her favorite partner; and whether these manifest and continual preferences for him proceeded from their mutual recollections of friendship with the honest-hearted old Dutchman, or from a softer and more tender feeling, so it was any way; and most of the other sighing swains called off their dogs,

to use Lick-the-skillet parlance, and quit the chase in utter despair of ever being in at the death.

But the crisis of Sophie's rustic life was approaching. In the neighborhood of her father's dwelling, lived a singular old bachelor, snug in his means, thrifty and parsimonious in habit, exclusive and retiring in manner, satisfied with himself, and envying nobody. Notwithstanding these habits of life and peculiarities of temperament, so entirely different from his own, Hop Hubbub had caught the blind side of this singular gentleman, and they were regular cronies and comrades. In fact, Captain Lafayette Mantooth had succeeded fully old Hans Von Tromp in Hop's friendship. It was owing entirely to the latter's influence and popularity that the captain had succeeded in being elected over all other candidates to the command of Lick-the-skillet beat company of militia; and, on parade days, he would appear on the field in an old suit of threadbare regimentals, which had belonged to the old corporal, his grandfather, in the war of Independence, with a rusty epaulette stuck on his right shoulder, and an immense dragoon sword swinging at his side. Being at least a foot taller than his worthy ancestor, the captain found it necessary to use straps to keep his breeches down, as well as suspenders to keep them up, and, for this purpose, his friend Hubbub had furnished him with a couple of red morocco strings, which met the hem of his pants just at the top of his boots; whilst the same friendly hand had surmounted the captain's military hat with a bunch of feathers gathered from a cock's tail, and ingeniously tied around a limber whalebone, torn from some cast-away umbrella. Imagine these military appliances attached to a tall,

gangling, long-limbed, water-jointed figure of a man, with long bushy red hair and broad projecting teeth, which it was his habit now and then to gnash fiercely and with an air of ludicrous gravity, and you will have a perfect picture of Captain Mantooth, or, as he himself gloried in being called, Captain *Marcus Lafeart* Mantooth. The captain was pertinacious about this first member, and was particularly waspish when corrected either as to that or to the pronunciation of the second part of his beloved name. His grandfather and father had called him thus—the first ought to know, he contended, as he had been under Lafayette—and, so fondly did he cherish these hereditary and ancestral precedents that he actually turned against and helped to defeat a sparkish, school-learned young candidate for the legislature, of his own political party, because he had innocently suggested that the captain had perverted the title of the French Marquis into a Roman name. Now, all of a sudden, it was discovered that the captain's usual quiet of life and equanimity were broken in upon by the ravages of that glowing and exciting passion which so often disturbs the peace of mind of better and wiser men than our captain, and as often changes the whole tenor and habits of life. Captain Mantooth was sorely smitten with love, and his heart ached and thumped whenever he thought of sweet Sophie Pomroy. Not a day-dream floated through his mind but Sophie was the lovely spirit who prompted it; and, at night, he was often heard to glibber and snort while fast asleep, and seen to clasp his long arms convulsively around an extra pillow, as some tempting vision lured him into the joyous belief that the lovely damsel was in his embraces. How this came about, together with all

the concomitant circumstances, leaked out in the catastrophe, and it devolves on me now to relate.

It was the custom of Captain Mantooth to carry his own grain to the mill, and at such times he generally went by a path which crossed the stream a short distance below the dam, and which was rarely ever traveled by any one but himself. It was a shady, secluded spot, overhung by intertwining branches, and sheltered all day long from the rays of the sun. The stream spread out into a wide, shallow current, dashing swiftly and noisily over the ledge of rocks which stretched from bank to bank, bubbling with innumerable bright ripples, and dotted here and there, at irregular intervals across, with clusters of green shrubs, which rendered the scene one of almost Arcadian beauty. What wonder, then, that the lovely Sophronia, so fond of such primitive indulgences, should often seek this romantic spot, and, deeming herself safe from prying eyes and unpleasant intrusions, reveal her charms "unadorned" to the mute objects around, and lave her voluptuous figure in the limpid element which flowed so temptingly along!

Now it happened that our friend Captain Mantooth took it into his head to visit the mill just at the same hour, one warm summer day, that the miller's daughter took it into *her* head to go a bathing at the secluded ford. As the captain had his regular days for such visits, the charming little water-nymph was totally unsuspicious, perhaps, of any intention on his part to make an out-of-the-way call at her father's mill. However, she had scarcely disrobed her graceful proportions, on the present occasion, and was seated in an attitude the most inviting and distracting in the world, on a moss-clad

rock, about midway the current, preparing to take the water, when our friend, the captain, mounted on his favorite pony, and astride his bag of wheat, rode suddenly and slowly up on the opposite bank. The bubbling waters prevented Sophie from catching any other sound, and she sat as if totally unconscious that mortal eye was feasting on those charms of person which might have tempted imperial Jove himself; whilst the astonished captain, dumb-stricken and fairly bewitched, let fall his long arms, locked his feet under his pony's belly, drew up his glowering eyes, opened wide his ivory-fenced mouth, and stared at the rapturous vision so long and so delightedly that a cold shiver shook every limb of his lean, lank frame, causing a rattle of dry bones much more definable than that which stirred up the skeletons of old in the vale of Jehoshaphat. The pony went quietly to cropping the herbage on the roadside.

Hitherto the captain had been afforded only a side view, a full-length profile of the unclad damsel; but scarcely had the pony bent his head to enjoy the pasture which tempted him, when, as if tired with one position, Sophie began to face about slowly; a sunbeam, penetrating a chance opening in the thick foliage, lighted up with lustrous and dazzling transparency a neck and bust which Venus might well have envied; and then the whole gorgeous array of beauties, indescribable, unimaginable, burst upon the enraptured vision of the captain, who, with a noise more like the groan of anguish than the sigh of excited love, fell back upon his pony's rump, relaxed and motionless. Never before had woman crossed his path; never had mortal eyes been feasted to the

full before with a picture which art vainly endeavored to portray!

No wonder Captain Mantooth was overpowered! No wonder that the blood now hissed and foamed through his veins with a fervor that kindled in his usually languid bosom new, and strange, and delightful emotions! He arose from that posture of prostration an altered man. He looked again with eager and glowing eyes; but the vision had departed; the lovely damsel no longer appeared in sight; a current of blood roared fiercely through his brain and blinded him for an instant, and then all seemed as if he had been in a delightful dream.

But Captain Mantooth never forgot that dream! It had assailed his senses with a reality too overpowering, and opened a train of emotions far too strong for that; and he resolved to devote the balance of his life to the single object of gaining possession of those charms and their fair owner.

Accordingly, the sun was just beginning to sink away over the lofty mountain top on the west, when who should be seen riding up to the gate, in a shambling trot, his long legs dangling about his pony's flanks, and his arms propped akimbo on either side, but the veritable captain of Lick-the-Skillet beat. And who, alighting without ceremony or invitation, walked into the house of the honest old miller, and inquired for Miss Sophie in person, as he was received by Mrs. Pomroy? Sophie, industrious and smart girl that she was, was at her loom, and Captain Mantooth was asked into the weaving-room. As he entered, the captain encountered another familiar face besides that of Miss Pomroy. Hop Hubbub was there, seated on a high warping-stool by the damsel's

side, and a look the most meaning dwelt on his features. The namesake of the great marquis was startled and not a little floundered; for he would sooner have fought a battle at the head of his Lick-the-skillet chivalry any day than suffered Hop to get a laugh on him. However, as there was no mending the matter now, the worthy captain stuffed away the dingy ruffles with which he had hoped to captivate the miller's daughter, slipped off nimbly a brass ring which he had put on his right forefinger by way of additional ornament, cleared his throat with a lusty exertion of lungs which jarred the floor under him, and then, catching a skirt of his long-tail Sunday coat across each crotch of his elbow, took his seat on another stool opposite to Hop's, first blowing away any dust which might have gathered on it, and running his hand over the whole seat to make sure of a clean sweep. A mischievous, though almost imperceptible, smile lurked on the mouth of the pretty weaver, and she turned her eyes on Hop, now and then, with a glance that plainly betrayed her strong inclination to mirth, and that carried sad misgivings and uneasy thoughts to the breast of Captain Lafayette Mantooth. He had come to declare his passion and to woo its fair object; but the signs were against him, and his love seemed likely to be lavished where it would meet with no requital. Poor Lafayette sighed deeply and involuntarily, and Hop contracted the muscles of his face still more drolly, and Sophie laughed outright. Neither of the three had yet spoken or made any attempt to speak. Hop sat grave as a judge, and the captain stared at Sophie with open mouth and eye singularly dilated; and Sophie herself kept busily at work with her slaie and

treddles. At last, Hop fell, or at least pretended to fall, fast asleep, reclining his head against the wall of the room near which he sat. The captain drew in his breath with a half rattle through the nostrils as the air passed on to the lungs, ventured to display about a third part of his ruffles, and advanced one leg at full length. Hop snored slightly, when on went the brass ring again, and the suitor laid his hand tremblingly on a corner of the loom, at the same time throwing out the other leg, as if to draw the damsel's eye upon his fair proportions of bone and muscle, for of flesh the captain could not lay claim to five pounds from head to foot, through his full stretch of six feet and a half of manhood. Now, he thought, was his opportunity to begin a conversation, and he drew up his mouth as the first necessary step towards preparation.

"You was in a-washing at my ford yesterday, weren't you, Sophie?" he asked in a low tone, blearing his eyes, and leering most hideously at his fair innamorata.

"In a-washing at *your* ford!" repeated Sophie, interrogatively, and turning her face full upon her questioner. "How do you know whether I was or not, Captain Mantooth?"

"Oh! I didn't say I knowed, did I, Sophie?" returned the suitor, throwing his eyes up and down alternately.

"What did you *mean*, then, Captain Mantooth?" asked the maiden, with increased emphasis. "What *can* you mean?"

"Nothing—nothing, Sophie," replied Lafayette, fearing he had made a wrong step; "I jist thought I'd ask you—was you, Sophie?"

"Upon my word, Captain Mantooth, you are a strange

sort of creature—very strange!" said Sophie, striving hard to maintain her gravity of demeanor. "One *might* have thought that you *saw* me from the way you talk."

At this, the captain darted bolt upright from his stool with a bound that a person might make who had been jarred by an electric shock. The whole enchanting scene was again before him, and the blood began to burn in his veins and mantle on his cheeks. But, in the midst of this ecstasy of feeling, Hop indulged another snore somewhat louder than the first, and the captain eased himself on the seat again, thoroughly cooled down by this nasal effort of his dreaded friend.

"Sophie, what if I *had* seed you?" asked Lafayette, after he had again composed himself.

"Well, and suppose you had, captain, sure enough, captain," returned Sophie, whilst a smile curled the corner of her mouth next to Hop, "you would only have seen——"

"What, Sophie?" ejaculated the excited Lafayette, again half rising, and clapping both hands in his pockets.

"Really, Captain Mantooth, I don't know what's got into you this evening," answered the maiden, coloring slightly.

"It didn't get into me this evening, Sophie," said the captain, with a look half mournful; "it got into me yesterday, about noon, and for the first time in my life, too."

"What?" asked Sophie, now in her turn fairly launched into a mischievous inclination, "*what* got into you, captain?"

"I don't know what to call it, Sophie," answered

Lafayette, in the same tone of voice, "but it's the singularest feeling that ever I had in the whole course of my life."

"How, in the world's name, *does* it make you feel, then?" again asked Sophie, stealing a roguish glance towards Hop, who was still nodding and dipping his head from side to side.

"Every which way—a sort o' all-overish—but the best in the whole world at times, Sophie!" answered the captain, with a leer which was intended to convey what he yet scarcely dared to say.

"Why really, captain, I shall begin to think presently that you are in love," said the lady, with a coquettish toss of the head.

"Is that the way love serves a body, Sophie?" asked Lafayette, with a snuffling simper, as he drew a little nearer.

"You'll have to ask them that's felt it," replied Sophie, with an arch, insinuating smile. "But, there! you've made me drop my shuttle with your silly talking!"

The instrument alluded to had only fallen about half way to the floor, and hung suspended by the thread, which had caught in a splinter. The pretty weaver bent over slightly to regain it, and as it had slipped out on the side next to the captain, she stooped far enough almost to touch him. The captain's eyes were just in the line of direction with Sophie's stomacher, and he ventured a slight peep at the concealed treasures; the next moment, he dodged back as if he had been suddenly struck at, and brought his teeth in contact with a crash like that of a nut-cracker. Again his blood quickened with a deli-

cious fervor, and, unable longer to resist or subdue the impulse, he had already stretched forth his lank arm, and was just in the act of grasping Sophie's white, bare arm, when a thundering discharge from Hop's nasal artillery arrested his amorous purpose, and sent the blood back again to the heart with a cold, curdling sensation that made his teeth now fairly chatter, as he drew up once more on the stool. The noise seemed also to have aroused the sleeper himself, for Hop now stretched and gave a loud yawn, straightened in his seat, and looked at the captain and Sophie as though he had just awakened from a comfortable and refreshing nap.

"Heigh! thunder and Boston!" he ejaculated, in his sharp, sonorous voice, glancing at the agitated lover, "why, what the deuce is the matter with you, my dear Mantooth?"

"I don't know, unless it be a slight ague," answered the captain, still shaking in every limb. "It'll wear off directly, though."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Hop, rising and approaching his friend.

"I've been thinking that something strange was the matter with Captain Mantooth for this half hour past," now put in Miss Sophie, winking at Hop, slyly.

"I suspect," said this last-named gentleman, assuming a very grave professional look as he pinched the captain's spine and chunked him slightly in the paunch, "I suspect, Mantooth, you've got the *whiffles*."

"The *whiffles!*" repeated Captain Mantooth, inquisitively, as he flinched and slid about under the doctor's rather singular examination, being most sadly alarmed,

too, by the grave announcement, "what may them be, Hop?"

"They are the very mischief when they once get a fair hold on a fellow," answered Hop, shifting his point of examination to the groins and kidneys of his shrinking friend. "They'll ruin you for life, Mantooth, unless speedily cured."

"How can they be cured, doc?" again asked the captain, for he had the most unshakeable faith in Hop's skill and knowledge, and really felt somewhat uneasy at his symptoms for the last twenty-four hours. "I'll take anything if you really think they are on me, Hop, for I wouldn't be ruined now for the whole world."

"Oh! as to that," replied Hop, carelessly, "you won't have to TAKE a single thing. The whiffles are cured in quite another way."

The captain's heart fluttered and sank as he heard this; for he had been often enough at his friend's shop in town to hear all about surgery and amputation, and various operations with the knife and tourniquet.

"And how may that be, doc?" asked the quaking lover, feeling his blood congeal at the bare idea of a surgical operation.

"That's a secret for the present," answered the imperturbable Hop, observing that the loom had ceased its motion, and that the merry little weaver was almost smothering with the desire to laugh, which, by the by, as the reader will soon find out, Hop by no means wished her to do for fear of offending the captain. "I'll tell you the whole matter when we get to your house. Come, get your hat and let's be off; you surely didn't intend to stay here all night!"

"Such had been my intention, Hop," answered the precise captain, who was too good a churchman to prevaricate, although he hated badly to confess as much; "but, if you'll go home with me, I shall be more than glad of your company."

This was soon settled, and the two friends proceeded to bid farewell to the charming little weaver, who did not forget to invite Captain Mantooth to repeat his visit, which elicited a low bow and an affirmative answer from that worthy gentleman.

A month had scarcely elapsed from the period of this first visit before the whole neighborhood of Lick-the-skillet was startled with a report that the pretty and admired daughter of Mr. Peter Pomroy was about to contract matrimonial ties with Captain Lafayette Mantooth. What added a great deal to the surprise of everybody, too, was the very curious fact that Hop Hubbub, whom every one had pitched upon for the husband of the fair Sophronia, and who was known to be high in the affections of that little lady, was now openly advocating Captain Mantooth's pretensions, and telling all the neighbors frankly that he had first put the enraptured captain (to use his own expression) on the scent. From this point, matters progressed so rapidly that the wedding day was soon named; the captain and his affianced bride rode always in public together most lovingly and familiarly, and, at last, a runner was sent round to invite the favored neighbors to the hymeneal feast and frolic.

Now, lest the conduct of our friend Hop should be misunderstood about this affair, and undue praise unwittingly lavished upon what may be mistaken for genuine magnanimity, I must here narrate what has been subse-

quently whispered about among the gossips of Lick-the-skillet, in order to account for this inexplicable interference, on his part, to urge the captain's suit to a successful issue. Hop loved candor in every department of life except one, and now that he is dead and gone, I am sure he will prefer, provided he has any choice in the matter where he now is, that his faithful biographer shall remove the veil even from that. Everybody about Lick-the-skillet knew that Hop was overly fond of the girls, and, as he had a big heart and a general penchant in this respect, he never concealed that he was averse to marriage. In fact, he was often heard to declare, in his own humorous way, that he feared but two things in the world, viz., a hurricane and a mad woman; and gave, among others, as his reason for living a bachelor life, that he dreaded, in case he had a wife, he might meet a girl he could love better, and that he would sooner stir up the d—l, any day, than a jealous woman. Hop, now, had been loving little Sophie Pomroy a long time, ever since old Hans Von Tromp's melancholy decease; and, after she had blossomed into ripe womanhood, and given evidence of those charming rustic accomplishments which soon drew to her general admiration, his passion gave him serious annoyance. Sophie soon showed that he was not disagreeable to her; and when, one day, Hop seized her around the waist just after a swimming race in which she had triumphed, and began to kiss her neck and lips with more than usual ardor, she artlessly indulged a reciprocal tenderness, declaring she loved him better than anything on earth, and dearly enough to become his for life. The first part of this declaration pleased and delighted Hop, but the second did not sound

so agreeable. He feared that she might make matrimony indispensable to the fulfilment of his wishes, and in this he was seriously resolved not to engage. A year passed away, and Hop became convinced that Sophie had settled on making this the price of her possession. She would allow him any degree of familiarity, and gratify her own love by taking full liberty with him in turn, yet further than this she would not consent to go, and strenuously repulsed every attempt which Hop ventured to make. She would ride and ramble with him, fish with him, swim with him unreservedly, and go a bathing with him in the same limpid and transparent pools; but there she stopped. She professed to feel, but steadily refused to grant his desires; and Hop at last got to believe her.

This proved a vexatious point, and often disturbed their intimacy for months at a time; but all of a sudden a perfectly agreeable understanding was arranged between them.

Now, whether Sophie's adventure with Captain Mantooth at the secluded ford was the result of pure accident, or of a compact with Hop to that effect, the reader must conjecture from the facts and from the sequel. But certain it is that Hop was soon acquainted with the whole affair, and, truly guessing that the captain had been too deeply smitten to delay making his addresses longer than he could compose himself, had taken up his abode at Mr. Pomroy's to witness the whole future progress of the plan, and was, therefore, fully prepared not only to see his fun, but also to perfect his designs, when his simple-minded friend rode up as described. What these designs were, the courteous reader must divine from what I shall now proceed to relate.

Like most uneducated and secluded people, many of the good citizens about Lick-the-skillet were tinctured with strong tendencies to the marvelous and supernatural. The wild and mountainous character of the country was eminently calculated to beget and nurture superstitious impressions. The dark winding glens, the unfathomed precipices, the unexplored caverns which now and then were discovered in the bed of the mountains, the dashing torrents and unfelled forests around, all contributed to produce such feelings. It will not, therefore, be wondered at that the mysterious and melancholy fate which had overtaken old Hans Von Tromp should have been the source of numerous awful stories in the neighborhood; and that as time wore on these stories had gained firmer hold on the imagination of those who heard or narrated them.

The mill had never been tenanted since the death of its builder, for, as Pomroy had negro fellows to aid him in sawing and grinding, he had no occasion to hire white men, who would, in such a case, have been forced to sleep in Hans Von Tromp's apartment, the owner's dwelling having but two rooms and a garret. The head negro was thoroughly the victim of superstitious fears, and on his authority principally some of the most awful tales were told about, in connection with the mill. It was reported that the black, being detained on a certain night much later than usual at the mill, had been surprised by the sudden entrance of a tall and large man, black like himself, with two small fireballs for eyes, and, instead of teeth of the usual kind, immense fangs of red hot iron supplied their place in his mouth. He proceeded straight to the old Dutchman's sleeping room, and entering without ceremony, his voice and old Von Tromp's were soon

heard at a high pitch, and seemingly engaged in a most ferocious quarrel. A noise of scuffling and stamping was heard next, and presently afterward the door of Hans' room flew wide open, whilst he and the black giant, locked in a deadly embrace, came whirling and wrestling through the mill-house, first one falling and then the other. As they approached the cavity near the fly-wheel, and through which it was the honest old millwright's joy and delight to watch its steady revolutions, Hans began to pull back and struggle more fiercely, and his hair rose erect on his head from excessive fright. The black man, however, urged him vigorously forward with a most unearthly grin; they came to its very edge, and Hans had only time to exclaim, in a voice of despair, "Dish wash no pard of der bargain, goot mynheer teufell!" before both went through together, the black on top, and then nothing more was ever seen of either.

Another version was that an old man who had come to the mill late one evening to get his employer's flour, being rather sleepy-headed, had fallen into a deep slumber in a dark corner of the room; and no one supposing but that he had gone back home, the millers all left for the night, locking him unfortunately in, to take his chances with the goblins and devils who were supposed to infest the house. He slept on very quietly until a little before midnight, when, all of a sudden, he was awakened by the sound of heavy footsteps, sounding over the floor towards the bolting-trough. An immense black figure strode past him, exhaling a strong scent of brimstone, which left no room to doubt that it was the devil. He entered old Von Tromp's room, who greeted him with a scornful guttural grunt as he opened the door.

Immediately the noise of a struggle was heard, and fierce imprecations were uttered by both parties; and then a crash followed, which seemed to jar the mill to its deepest foundations, at the same time that a terrible splash was heard in the waters of the race underneath.

These wild stories, and many others of a like marvelous character, were afloat through the whole district of Lick-the-skillet, and no one believed them more devoutly and unqualifiedly, as it happened, than Captain Lafayette Mantooth. Hop Hubbub was well aware of this infirmity of the captain, and he resolved to play off upon his credulous friend, on the night of his marriage, a most cruel and wicked prank.

It has been mentioned that Mr. Pomroy's house afforded not a single spare bed-room, and, as Hop very naturally concluded that they would be compelled to make use of old Hans Von Tromp's snug little apartment in the mill for a nuptial chamber, he determined to oust the unfortunate bridegroom of his promised bridal enjoyments, if personating the devil and the Dutchman could do it. With this view he had to enlist the services of a boon companion in mischief, hardly less known through Lick-the-skillet than himself. But, as Mr. Josiah Morehead was a merchant in full business, besides being a noted sportsman, and, in consequence, often called from home on long journeys, he was not a very frequent visitor at this favorite haunt of his friend Hop, and had not been there for years when called to go down upon this occasion. Joe had a long head and a most inventive genius. He had even been known to outwit Hop himself on several occasions, which caused many to wonder afterwards why the latter should have employed him on that in question.

He was handsome and more dressy than Hop, and was always enabled thus to run ahead in the good graces of the tender sex.

The wedding-day came, and the invited guests set busily about preparing to lend their friendly aid in making way with the substantial viands which they knew Mrs. Pomroy had furnished for the occasion. A solemn fast was held during the entire day, that they might not destroy or impair the tone of their eager appetites; and in honor of the event Mr. Pomroy closed his mill until the next morning, which enabled him to devote his whole time in arranging for the festivity. About the middle of the afternoon, Hop Hubbub and his friend Morehead, being both engaged to wait on the impatient bridegroom, rode up to announce the captain's readiness for the event, saying that he had been washed and dressed ever since noon. The fair bride was, however, still engaged at the cake bowls, and received the two groomsmen in the supper room in her ordinary tidy attire, with her sleeves tucked up considerably above the elbow, and her frock and petticoats drawn half way to the knee; whilst her pretty face was all in a flush from excitement and fatigue. Such was the fascination of her looks and manner, such the striking development of her voluptuous figure thus attired, that Joe Morehead, frail creature that he was, fell into an ecstasy of admiration at first sight, and, as he had known her when a child, and was her father's intimate friend and merchant, the charming Sophie was forced to allow him a hearty salute of her sweet lips; and, it may as well be added, that, improving by the rule of taking an inch where an ell has been granted, Joe could not resist the temptation to press to his bosom her soft and glowing

form. Such tokens of warm admiration from this fine and handsome gentleman so pleased the bride elect that she betrayed her joy by a scarlet blush, which, as may be imagined, Joe by no means failed to notice particularly; and when, after a minute or two, Hop stepped out to see the old folks, he availed himself of the opportunity to repeat, far more warmly, the same delightful feats of gallantry and devotion, which thoroughly enraptured the susceptible young creature to whom he had already imparted a share of his glowing passion.

Look out, Hop—that thou hast not a cuckoo's egg in thy nest, and trusted thy secret to wily hands!

The hour approached, and a whole troop of neighbors, all in their Sunday clothes, and rigged out in all the finery they could scrape up by hook or by crook, already filled the parlor of the miller's house, anxiously awaiting the appearance of the wedding folks, as they called the bride and her groom. The parson who was to join them as man and wife had arrived; the old folks had come in and taken their seats; and as, now and then, a fragrant scent from the luscious viands in the next room would flavor the passing breath of wind, and draw the salivary fluids to a hundred craving mouths, the whole company would simultaneously ejaculate a wish that the young people would come along and have it over at once.

At length they were gratified; the bridal party appeared, attended by half a dozen couples of groomsmen and ladies in waiting, and the ceremony was commenced. All eyes were turned to catch a last glimpse of the belle of Lick-the-skillet, ere she changed her lot in life. "Ah, Sophie!" every one thought, "no more wild romping and swimming with thy admirers now!" Sophie never looked prettier

in all her life. She was dressed with no pretensions to the fashion of the day; but, if there was none of this, its absence was more than compensated in those round, naked arms, that soft neck, and the glowing bust which was only half concealed by her low stomacher.

But ah! how shall I describe thee, happy, thrice happy Lafayette Mantooth—thou worthy representative of all the pride and chivalry of thy native Lick-the-skillet! Deeply impressed, like a sincere Christian ought to have been, with the importance and solemnity of the occasion, the captain approached to the centre of the room with slow, measured step, eyes half closed, head thrown slightly back, and with a countenance of woe and sanctimony that would have done no discredit to Job in the darkest hour of his affliction. He looked as though he had come to bury Sophie, not to wed her; but the captain had good reason for this unseasonable tristfulness of demeanor. He had pondered the matter well over, and had brought his mind to conclude that, heathen as he was, he was entering into the holy estate of matrimony, not by God's appointment as he should do, but in unworthy obedience to carnal weakness and desires. These, it is true, were uncontrollable and irrepressible, but by way of full penance the captain felt it to be his duty to approach the altar devotionally and meekly; and although he strictly fulfilled this vow in mind and to outward appearance, yet Sophie was, once or twice, in their passage to the wedding apartment, forced to cry out softly for quarter, as the eager groom would involuntarily press and squeeze her tender arm betwixt his sharp, projecting ribs, and the pointed elbow in whose capacious crotch that pretty limb was resting.

The captain's wedding apparel eminently became his lank, ungainly figure. It consisted, first, of a blue broadcloth coat with brass buttons, with an immense collar reaching almost to the crown of his flat head, and falling gradually as it met the lapel; the point of conjunction being marked by two huge intersecting flaps, shaped like dogs' ears, and standing out prominently on either side. The waist of the coat had out-traveled his own by at least half of a foot, and the skirts dangled quite gracefully below the knee as the wearer stalked along; whilst the loose breeches bagged and flapped around his diminutive legs with a motion not unlike that of the elephant's ears as he marches leisurely around the ring. His chin was propped by a high stiff stock, which fitted so closely around his neck that, what with this and the starched shirt collar which covered the whole lower portion of his face, the captain was scarcely enabled to move his head without carrying around his whole body; and to complete the picture, his feet were supplied with a pair of stout-soled high quarter shoes, selected and brought out by Joe Morehead, which creaked forth delightful music by way of heralding his martial steps.

Now, the old preacher, whose jolly, rubicund face had been nothing but a convexity of bland expectant smiles all along (doubtless in anticipation of the good cheer and handsome fee which awaited him), no sooner caught sight of the sanctimonious and rueful expression of the worthy groom, for whose piety and snug property he had all imaginable respect, than he also drew down his features to a genuine religious length, drooped his eyes, and assumed at once a becoming gravity of manner. He began the ceremony in a hoarse, bull-frog sort of drawl, that

had nearly discomposed the fair bride and her two mischievous friends at the very outset; whilst it so deeply impressed the captain that he gave a long, deep, penitential sigh by way of response. The answers of the fair bride were made in such subdued whispers that they were scarcely audible to those who stood around, and when interrogated to know whether, forsaking all others, she would cling only to him who was now to become her lord, Sophie responded so indistinctly, and with such an arch expression of eyes and mouth, that none were able to determine clearly whether she had said yes or no. The preacher, however, was not the man to balk at ceremony on this point, and, presuming an affirmative where nothing warranted a negative, he proceeded to put the same question to Captain Mantooth. This time, however, the worthy parson put on rather a more demure face, assumed a more affected and drawling tone of voice, and dwelt tremblingly and lingeringly upon each word as it fell from his lips. The captain all along had attributed Sophie's low, indistinct mutterings to that amiable and becoming diffidence so common and so very natural under the circumstances, and now that his turn had come to promise, solemnly, that he would love, honor, and protect her as his wedded wife, and cling to her only of all women on earth, he resolved, by a master-stroke, to inspire and reassure her with a portion of his own honest confidence and mental tranquillity. To this end he elevated his head an inch or two above the level of his stock, swayed his back slightly, closed his eyes altogether, and responded in the same tone as the preacher's, "I will, Brother Dipwell, the Lord being my helper!"

As the captain uttered these words at full prayer pitch,

and just exactly in the attitude which I have described, the effect produced on the auditors was instantaneous, though quite various. The preacher involuntarily opened his eyes, as though taken by surprise; the old Baptist men and women present simultaneously sealed the promise with a fervent amen; some of the young folks tittered, and others giggled outright. But Hop! He would not have taken the profits of a year's practice for the scene—and it would have done one good to have seen how, with a dexterity peculiar to himself, he threw up the corners of his eyes Chinese fashion, and how quizzically he puckered his mouth—though he did not so much as crack a smile. Not so with the merry-hearted and less stoical bride! She fell, for support, full against the lank, hollow side of her newly-made lord (who could scarcely contain himself for rapture under the sweet burden), and gave vent to her feelings by a flow of uncontainable, though subdued laughter; whilst the muscles of Joe Morehead's mouth and nose began to twitter and jump at a most frolicksome rate, which was a way that worthy had of expressing his diversion and merriment, rather than by the usual vulgar mode.

The ceremony being over, the groom managed, by dint of stretching and propping his sparse allowance of lips, to get a sufficiency of skin over his teeth to give a salute to his shrinking bride; and then her cheeks and mouth were literally stormed with volleys of smacking kisses from those around, male as well as female, whilst many claimed the wedding privilege of hugging and tousing the bride and all her maids. At length a truce was begged and quarter solicited by the weaker party, and then the revels and carousing began. None of your

frigid, staid, ceremonious doings! Everybody felt merry, and everybody danced, the preacher himself leading down in the opening reel, and the old miller and his well-worn dame close at his heels. Lafayette capered and shuffled as if he had been born anew in the flesh as well as in the spirit, and if, in crossing over once, his legs had not unfortunately become tangled so as to trip him suddenly over, he would, undoubtedly, have borne off the palm from all competitors, for the captain always danced for the love of the thing, in good, earnest sincerity, not for the purpose of merely showing himself off in certain nimble feats or graceful steps.

How everybody's heart bounded and thumped when the little brass bell rang for supper in Sophie's weaving-room! The dancing ceased in a second, and in the very midst of a merry reel, in which Joe Morehead and the bride were performing cuts and crossings which drew unbounded admiration. Each one seized hold of his partner, and dashed off at a long trot, for the hearty exercise had only served to increase the eagerness of appetites already most severely tested. And then followed such furious assaults upon the carcasses of slaughtered chickens, and ducks, and turkeys, and even of geese, all of whom had yielded up their lives in the cause! The smoke-house had been brought under contribution also, and several greasy, well-smoked, mellow-flavored old hams occupied regular stations along the centre of the table, showing the extent of the innovation; whilst here and there, as if to prove that every species of foray had been put in practice, a haunch of dried venison, and messes of nicely-fried fish, recently drawn from the trap under the mill (a relic of Hans Von Tromp's piscatory

achievements and skill), were spread out in tempting array before the delighted guests. A row of side tables groaned beneath the weight of cakes, and puddings, and home-made preserves; and large hampers of apples and peaches were seen planted in every corner of the room; while, to crown all, the jolly old miller would now and then admonish his guests to save themselves as much as possible, as he had in the back entry (to use his own expression and simple language), "a plenty of millions, both water and mush."* Never before had such fine doings been seen in Lick-the-skillet, and several acknowledged frankly that they had set eyes for the first time, that night, on knives and forks. In proof of this, it was remarked that many a forest-born yeoman did not know how to use them, until instructed by some more traveled neighbor, and then they declared, with a grin, "that the things helped a body powerfully in eating."

After supper had been dispatched, and when every one had declared himself fully satisfied, the guests again adjourned to the parlor (or, as the people of Lick-the-skillet would say, the big room), and the dancing was resumed for awhile, that the ample allowance of victuals which had been taken in might be well stowed and settled before bed-time. By way of an agreeable change, dancing was suspended occasionally, and "Sister Phebe," "Grind the Bottle," and "Blind man's buff" were introduced. At length, an hour or so after midnight, the amusements of this pleasant evening, which was marked as having been the brightest in the life of many who were

* Backwoods people, in the South, invariably pronounce *melon* as if it was *million*, and they conclude that the soft, *mushy* contents of the *musk*melon must, of course, give name to the fruit.

present, were brought to an end by the time-honored custom of selling and redeeming pawns. By three o'clock all the merry guests had departed for their homes, and Lafayette was left, accompanied only by his two principal attendants, to prepare for the grand finale of all wedding nights.

But a most painful and alarming piece of news was in store for the impatient bridegroom. Hop Hubbub and Joe Morehead, who had just returned from escorting, in company with the maids, the fair bride to her quarters for the night, now entered to inform Captain Mantooth that Sophie was snugly abed in old Von Tromp's room at the mill, and that he might follow as soon as he chose. The captain started, and stared at his attendants with mute incredulity; but when he was seriously assured that such had really been the arrangement, his knees smote together in spite of all efforts to control their motion, and his heart sank within him. The blood which had been coursing through his veins at boiling-point temperature the moment before now dropped to zero in a trice. The captain was actually debating to himself whether he should not fly the track, for his fears of ghosts were too strongly implanted to be shaken from their hold even by his anticipated pleasure.

At this moment, Joe Morehead left the room, and Hop alone undertook the guidance of the now sorely-frightened bridegroom. The captain was ashamed, of course, to explain the cause of his delay and indecision, and Hop was vastly too smart at his business even to hint that he suspected it; so, after the lapse of fifteen or twenty minutes, he at last succeeded in leading the captain out of the

house, and, having conducted him to the door of the mill, thrust him forcibly in, and bade him a hasty good night.

The mill room was perfectly dark, and Lafayette, thus suddenly abandoned and left to himself, could perceive only a faint ray of light glimmering through the keyhole of the bridal chamber. Two or three immense strides of his long legs carried him two-thirds of the distance which intervened; and then, collecting his shattered and palsied strength, he succeeded in clearing the remainder by a single leap, striking against the door with a force that actually jarred the whole building. In an instant more he had forced it open, and presented himself before his surprised and laughter-loving spouse an animated mass of shaking terror. But here matters presented to him a worse aspect than ever. There, in its accustomed corner, still stood the rough bedstead of old Von Tromp, and from which he had risen to engage in the unholy strife which ended in his death. Mr. Pomroy had reverentially forbidden all persons under him ever to remove it, and so here it was now just as its occupant had left it six years ago, with his large sea chest, and hat, and boots, all stowed away by its side. Lafayette's teeth chattered, and his long bony limbs shook terribly whilst he undressed and prepared for bed. Not even the sight and presence of that charming little creature who had been the subject of his thoughts by day and of his dreams by night for a month past, added to the consciousness that she was now all his own, could allay or dispel the awful sensations of fright which deprived him of his vigor, and were about to cheat him of his fondest anticipations.

At length, however, he managed to get rid of his outer garments, and then, with quaking heart and fluttering

pulse, extinguished the lamp. As the light had been placed on a chair quite near to the bed, it cost the captain but a single exertion to slide in; and, nimbly whisking up the sheets and counterpane, he covered over head and ears before one could have said Jack Robinson, and then tumbled up close to Sophie, who often declared afterwards that his bones felt just like lumps of ice.

All now was quiet for several minutes, and under the soothing influences of Sophie's balmy breath, the captain was beginning to coax and warm himself into comparative forgetfulness and ease of mind, when, suddenly, the large door of the mill-room was heard to swing open with a harsh, reverberating slam. Lafayette jumped as though every nerve in his body had been severed, and shuddered from head to foot with unfeigned alarm. Heavy, clanging footsteps resounded over the floor, and were evidently advancing to the bridal chamber at a regular measured pace. The perspiration gathered in large drops on Lafayette's forehead, and quickly bedewed his whole body; while, at the same time, Sophie's little heart began to beat pitty-pat, in double quick time, though from a very different cause than ghostly fear. Just as the steps paused at the door of the chamber, Lafayette found that sulphurous vapors were penetrating through keyhole, and crevice, and window cranny, and he felt already the symptoms of suffocation. One hope, however, flashed on his mind; he had locked and bolted the door securely, and as old Hans Von Tromp was not there to let the intruder in, he persuaded himself, faintly and partially, that the latter might go away without attempting forcible entrance. But this delusive ray was soon dissipated and obscured. The echo of the last step without had scarcely

died away, before Lafayette's sharpened ears caught the sound of a creaking noise in the direction of Von Tromp's bedstead, like that which might proceed from some one moving heavily over in sleep. In a moment, all the wild and awful tales of the strife betwixt the old Dutchman and the black giant, with the whole horrid accompaniments, came to his recollection. He saw already the grim features, the blazing eyeballs, and red hot teeth of the one; the fierce struggles, the harsh imprecations, and frantic appeals of the other, fell next on his ear. Then came the deadly grapple, and the unearthly laughter, and the dying groans, and the splashing uproar of troubled waters.

This ghastly concentration of all that was revolting to mortal man, and appalling to human nature, was more than the weak nerves of Captain Lafayette Mantooth could possibly endure, or have been expected to endure. No wonder he should forget his blooming bride, and forego his eager anticipations!

As things stood, let alone what was expected to ensue, the captain felt that there was no safety for a Christian man but in speedy flight, and for this there was but one only chance. Immediately at the head of his bed was a capacious window, defended only by a stout shutter, which fastened inside by means of an iron hook and staple. The sill was not more than ten feet from the ground, and this to Captain Mantooth's legs was no distance at all. His resolution was formed in a trice of time; and, in momentary dread that he would next hear old Von Tromp's grunt of welcome to his black visitor, without even stopping to catch up a single piece of clothing, and leaving Sophie to take devil's fare with the hindmost,

Lafayette opened the window with a nimble, sleight-o'-hand effort, made a swinging leap through the air, with the tail of his long shirt streaming full out behind, and, having reached the ground safely, scampered off towards his own quiet home with the agility and speed of a flying Indian.

The track having thus been cleared, the nocturnal intruder without began to twist and turn softly the knob of the door, and to rap slightly, now and then, on the panels. But all to no purpose; everything was still within. Surely, thought Hop (who, as the reader has doubtless imagined, was personating the black visitor of old Von Tromp) the girl has not followed the groom! Anxious to ascertain this fact and beginning already to distrust his wily confederate, Hop applied his lips to the key-hole, and whispered, in a low tone of voice, "Sophie! Sophie!" No answer came, but a suppressed titter caught his sharpened ear, followed by a smart rustle of shucks and feathers, as if the fair bride had rolled from one side of the bed to the other. Hop waited anxiously one moment to see if his ally would now open the door according to arrangement; but Joe had, apparently, forgotten this part, or, considering that the groom's flight (ere he had even found a chance to grunt for the old Dutchman) was the signal for his own departure, had probably made his escape, as was agreed, through the same aperture. The door remained fast, and Hop, at length, lost all patience. Again, however, he essayed the pronunciation of Sophie's name, and the whispers were sent through the keyhole somewhat louder, but still subdued. His respiration was almost entirely suspended, as he eagerly listened for some answering signal within.

Suddenly he started back as if an earwig had leaped into the distended cavity of his ear; a knowing, half-humorous expression flitted over his countenance. He then turned despairingly from the door, and, dismantling himself of the disguise he had adopted, slid quietly back through the window of Sophie's weaving-room, which had been assigned to Joe Morehead and himself for sleeping quarters during the few hours that were yet wanted to bring the daylight.

"The sly old trout!" muttered Hop, as he groped his way cautiously to the pallet, fearing to upset some chair or table, "a nice rare-ripe I have made of myself!"

"Holloh!" exclaimed the voice of Joe Morehead, in a smothered tone, as he turned softly over at hearing Hop, "why, what the deuce brought you back so soon?"

Hop, for the first time in his life, shuddered with sudden apprehension. He was expecting to hear any other voice than that of his friend at that time, and when he called to mind what had transpired scarcely ten minutes since, could not at first believe that it really was the veritable Joe in solid flesh and blood.

"*Here*, are you, curse you!" said Hop, half seriously, as he slipped into the vacant place on the pallet, and chunked Joe's portly side and belly with several vigorous bouts with his fist.

"Here, indeed!" answered the imperturbable Joe. "Why, I've been back these twenty minutes or more! Confess, Hop, didn't I act old Von Tromp's part to the very life?"

"In a horn—" answered Hop, mysteriously.

"What do you mean?" asked Joe, quite gravely. "Why, didn't you hear me grunt?"

"Yes did I, by Jucks!" replied Hop, "several times; and much more naturally than ghosts usually grunt. Your'e a crack grunter, Joe!"

"I thought it was best to give him a *good* scare, you know!" said Joe, archly and dryly.

"It didn't seem to scare *Sophie* much, I thought!" again said Hop, with quizzical emphasis.

"Oh! Sophie understood it all, you know!" answered Joe, in the same artless, indifferent tone.

"I rather think she did!" was Hop's laconic reply.

"What a devilish little hussy she is!" said Joe; laughingly.

"Yes—a *devilish* more so than I *thought!*" replied Hop.

"It's not at all surprising, though!" gaped out Joe; "she's had the best sort of a teacher, you know, Hop!"

"Yes," again answered Hop, chunking Joe stronger than ever, "yes, *the very* best the country affords. I'll knock under after this, old trout!"

"What if Mantooth *should* find it out?" asked Joe, seemingly indifferent.

"I guess Sophie will manage about that for you!" replied Hop.

"For *me!*" said Joe, whistling for surprise. "I suppose *you* had no part in it, then! I thought you were more man than to beat a retreat after the battle's over!"

"Oh! as for *me*," answered Hop, carelessly, "I didn't so much as get a sight of the battle, the escalade, or the escape. The old Dutchman's ghost found better fare, it would seem, than fighting his black visitor, for he did not even think to open the door!"

"Why, I followed Mantooth, you know," said Joe, in

a low and lisping sort of tone, "and had no time to open the door; and, besides, I hardly thought it was fair to scare both bride and groom."

"So, it scared Sophie, after all, then!" said Hop. "Why, I thought she understood it all, Joe!"

"Yes," answered Joe, with admirable imperturbability, "but she screamed a *little* when I grunted, in spite of all she could do!"

"No wonder!" said Hop, bluntly.

"And so you came off right away, did you?" asked Joe, again.

"No, I waited a little, just a little while, Joe!" was Hop's answer. "I hardly thought you'd 've beat me back, though."

"Well, I fear it will play the very d—l to-morrow, all through Lick-the-skillet!" said Joe, half seriously.

"No; I think the d—l has played his full part to-night, friend Joe!" answered Hop, in his natural tone. "Come, old trout, no more see-sawing. You've trumped my trick right fairly, and I'm not the man to revoke, you know!"

"Well, well," drawled forth Joe, "you're the strangest fellow I ever saw! Here you go to——"

"True to the last, hey!" said Hop, turning over, laughingly. "Well, there's the roosters—let's go to sleep."

The next morning, soon after sunrise, the worthy and valorous captain, accompanied by one or two of his near neighbors, was seen riding up to Mr. Pomroy's gate. Sophie, already up and dressed, welcomed them at the door, directing towards her husband a look in which disgust was faintly commingled with mischief; whilst

Mr. Pomroy and his spouse, totally taken aback by his appearance in such company, and fully believing that he had passed the night with their fair daughter, stared at first one, and then the other, in mutual surprise.

"Good morning, Sophie!" said the captain, approaching his blushing bride, "how did you make out last night after I was forced to leave you?"

"Oh, very well indeed, I thank you, captain!" answered the bride, shrinking back, and curtsying leeringly.

"He didn't get in then?" asked the captain, amazed.

"Who—*who* get in?" asked Sophie, in turn.

"The devil, sure!" answered the captain, with quaking emphasis.

"You must be out of your senses, you old fool!" said the bold Sophie, affecting very considerable pettishness.

"What? and didn't the *inside* one trouble you either?" again asked the puzzled captain, holding up both hands.

"I assure you, my doughty sir, I was never less troubled in my life than last night, especially after *you* left me," answered Sophie, smiling as she again curtsied.

"My God! my God, Sophie!" exclaimed her perplexed lord, in doleful accents, "I made sure, my darling, you'd be ruined forever. Oh, neighbors, and Mr. Pomroy, I was sorely, most sorely beset this overnight."

"Since the world was made," put in old Mrs. Pomroy, casting up her eyebrows, and puckering her mouth, "did ever a man talk before about being *beset* on his wedding night—and Sophie so young, too!"

"I do assure you, dear madam," answered the cap-

tain, in the same tone, "that I grieve and am ashamed to tell what happened to Sophie and me last night."

"And how do *you* know, sir, *what* happened to me?" asked Sophie, brushing up smartly.

"And I'd make you *know*, if I was Sophie, for blabbing this way before two men neighbors!" again said the now nettled dame.

"Ah, my friends!" sighed the captain appealingly, speaking to Mr. Pomroy and his neighbors, "it was the Dutchman and the Evil One, as sure as earth. It must have been. Nothing else but the fear of the soul's enemy could ever have driven me from my bride's arms."

"Driven you from your bride's arms!" repeated Mr. Pomroy, now joining in also, gravely and sternly. "You surely did not leave Sophronia alone last night, Captain Mantooth; let me hope not, for the sake of all the men in Lick-the-skillet!"

"Not alone, neighbor Pomroy," again sighed the captain, "but worse than alone, I fear—far worse. I fear mightily, dear sir, that the devil was near to her, if not with her, this night last gone."

"The d—l, sure enough!" says Sophie, tossing her head. "I say, too, if the d—l ever goes about in the shape of a flat turnip stuck on two handspikes, with a blown-up eelskin for his body, I surely had him with me last night, but, thank God, not long."

"How strange this all is!" ejaculated Mr. Pomroy.

"Oh, you must know, pa, that Captain Mantooth jumped out of the window and left me, last night, before he ever got cleverly into bed," said Sophie, turning to her father with an air of complaint; "never mind,

though, for, as God 's my judge, the *creature* never comes a-bed with me again!"

"Oh, don't say that, Sophie; you'll kill me if you do!" said Captain Mantooth, imploringly, and seriously alarmed.

"I *will* say it, and stick to it, too!" answered the offended bride.

"Captain Mantooth, I must say that you've acted the strangest I ever have heard talk of," said Mr. Pomroy. "Do tell us what's been the cause of all this flare-up."

The captain complied; and, beginning with the time when Hop Hubbub had pushed him into the mill, narrated faithfully the whole scenes that followed—the footsteps, the noise in old Von Tromp's bed, his own fright, and his escape through the window. During this strange recital, the two neighbors, who believed every word of it, as well as the wild tales about the Dutchman and the black giant, listened with staring eyes and open mouths, attesting the same by declaring that they had been aroused soon after midnight by Captain Mantooth, afoot, with nothing on but his shirt, and on his way home, who told them just the same story which he had now told Mr. Pomroy. But this latter sagacious gentleman gave several meaning nods of the head, as though, whilst not doubting his son-in-law's veracity, he was gravely dissenting to his opinions of the supernatural agencies which had been at work, and which showed, moreover, plainly enough, that, with true professional acumen, he could see deeper into the millstone than that. He admitted, very wisely, that somebody had *played* the devil, sure enough, but that he thought that the devil *himself* was free from all guilt in *this* instance; whilst his

equally sharp-witted old dame blessed herself that Sophie was married just the same as if she had been the mother of a dozen children.

"And where 's Hop Hubbub and Mr. Morehead?" asked one of the neighbors, who had caught an idea from Mr. Pomroy.

"Oh, they left more than an hour ago," answered the miller, as he exchanged a shrewd glance with his brightening neighbor.

"Indeed!" said Sophie, wonderingly and artlessly, "I thought, pa, they went away last night."

"No, child," put in Mrs. Pomroy, regarding Sophie tenderly and pryingly; "we put them in the weaving-room on a pallet after the supper things were moved out; and they must have slept mighty softly and quietly, for we heard nothing of them till just before day."

"Sophie!" said the captain, after he had finished his narration, and sidling up to his bride, whose face was now again bright and beaming as ever, "Sophie, you'll take that back, and go home with me to-night now, won't you, sweet?"

"Yes, Sophie, I think you had best pardon the captain," said her father. "Strange things *will* happen sometimes; and the mill was just the place for them to happen. So, now, neighbors, we'll all agree to say nothing about what's befel the captain here, and Sophie; and you, Sophie, must go home, and behave so prettily for the future that the devil will never get after you again."

To this, the charming bride of Lick-the-skillet found it necessary to assent, and, as a token of her reconciliation with the captain, permitted him to kiss those cherry

lips, and embrace that peerless figure, which had so long charmed his imagination, and filled him with fondest love. I have never heard but that they lived most happily together as man and wife, and, though there are some pretty little stories circulated about the night that Sophie spent with the ghost of her old friend, Hans Von Tromp, in the mill-house, and it is whispered that Mr. Joe Morehead is a frequent and favorite visitor at her husband's mansion, yet she has the character of being a pattern of a wife.

Old Peter Pomroy and his wife were still living when I last visited Lick-the-skillet. Hop Hubbub is dead, they say; but when, and how, and where he died, nobody exactly knows. Many believe that he will one day reappear in his old haunts; but it is a thing spoken about as if they thought he might as likely appear in the shape of a ghost as of a man.

I cannot undertake to argue this point, but certain I am, and sadly do I fear that, taking him all in all, we shall never behold Hop's like again.

"But you surely will tell us something more about that wily old mad-cap, Joe Morehead?"

No, kind reader; here must end the Bride of Lick-the-skillet.

THE INNKEEPER'S WIFE:

A STORY OF THE REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

In Prince Edward county, Virginia, within a short distance of the Court House, and a few miles only from Hampden Sydney College, stands a venerable edifice, known to this day as Moore's old Ordinary, or, in Virginia parlance, *Or'nary*. Anterior to the War of the Revolution, and during the whole of that eventful struggle, it had been a favored resort of the travelers, and of the soldiers passing to or from the scene of action.

During the war, the proprietor of this ancient establishment was Major Joseph Moore, an Englishman by birth, but known throughout the struggle for independence as an unwavering and active Whig, though holding no office in the army, or under Congress. In times of dismay and general misgiving, when the Old Dominion was crowded with hostile troops, and the wearied, half-famished troops of Greene and Lafayette were everywhere driven before their victorious arms—this old gentleman took heart of grace by greeting daily with his morning cup a miserably painted picture of General

Washington which adorned his parlor mantel, and encouraged his desponding neighbors by examples of daring and ceaseless activity in serving the good cause. He had provoked, to an irreparable extent, the vengeance of the British and Hessian officers, not only by adroitly eluding their most cautious searches, but by his zeal in forwarding provisions of food and clothing to the suffering troops of his adopted country. From the beginning, he had calculated the price of his adhesion to the colonial authorities, and bravely resolved to meet the issue of his patriotic decision by the sacrifice of all he owned, if such became necessary. Whilst his pursuers were in the neighborhood, he was often forced to take to the woods with his negroes and stock, where he would live for days and weeks in a large cave, the existence of which was known to none but stanch friends.

When it is told that, during these ever-recurring absences, the young wife of this determined Whig resolutely kept by her troubled board, steadily discharging her duties as mistress and landlady, it will easily be conjectured that she could have been none but an extraordinary woman, such as, in those days, stamped an undying influence on their neglected and underrated sex. The writer of this sketch recalls at this period with peculiar pleasure, not unmixed with some pride, many a tale of the heroic fortitude and Spartan courage which distinguished his venerable ancestress, and charmed many an hour of his youthful days. She was emphatically *a woman of the Revolution.*

Unlike her husband, who was originally a ship-builder, she was well-born, and inherited an ample fortune. In the earlier years of marriage, she had to endure the re-

flection, not a little mortifying to her pride, of being thought wedded to a man rather beneath her station and pretensions. But, after the war broke out, and laudations were showered on her husband for his indomitable exertions, both by his neighbors and by officers of the army who had experienced the benefit of his aid, all pompous clamor was silenced, and his station was considered suited to any family. Pope's famous couplet was never more strikingly illustrated than by his history :—

> "Honor and worth from no condition rise :
> Act well your part; there all the honor lies."

The year 1781 was prolific in important events for American Independence, and Virginia was all anxiety. On one side she was held in terror by the haughty and ruthless Hessians under Sir Henry Clinton, expecting hourly invasion and devastation ; whilst on the other, the fierce veterans of Cornwallis and the "invincible legion" of Tarleton threatened to crush all within their reach. Greene's army, that heroic column which had fought through all obstacles, and suffered and bled in utter despair of all relief; which had defied the discipline of British regulars, the pangs of famine, the fury of the elements, the pitiless severity of the seasons, naked and half armed, and had triumphed over all ; this army, hotly pursued by Cornwallis, was in the neighborhood. In the very sight, and under the guns of their incensed enemy, they had crossed the Dan, and the whole country rang with shouts of exultation at the brilliant feat. The sturdy Whig population of the surrounding counties poured out *en masse*, to relieve their wants in food, clothing, and accoutrements. The expiring spark of patriot-

ism was rekindled, and the torch of freedom and of the revolution burned with new vigor.

As may be supposed, these circumstances and their results, so well calculated to countervail the recent depression, which was vainly thought the prelude to universal dismay and submission, greatly exasperated the British leaders, and they wreaked vengeance in ways utterly repugnant to all rules of civilized warfare, and degrading to humanity. Houses were ransacked, beds ripped open, furniture spoiled, and provisions and property destroyed, without discrimination and without mercy. Parties were sent to scour the country, who scrupled not to murder or imprison the men, and to insult the women. It was a time for the daughters of America to summon all their fortitude ; for husbands, fathers, and brothers, unprepared to provide for or protect them under the rapid assaults and sudden onsets of the British cavalry, were forced, without choice or remedy, to leave them to what meagre courtesy and forbearance their sex or their situation could extract from their fierce invaders. Nor did woman's fortitude and courage fail or flinch in these appalling emergencies.

Now it happened that, on a cold night in the year above named, whilst our family at the Ordinary were quietly seated around the cheerful fireside, engaged doubtless in recounting the stirring news developed at each day's close, a negro who had been on the lookout entered, breathless and trembling, with the unwelcome and ever-terrifying announcement that "the red coats under Tarleton were in the neighborhood, and might ride up at any moment." All was instantly alarm and confusion. The wife refused to sleep in such suspense,

and bracing herself against the depressing effects of unnecessary fear, actively abetted her husband in his preparations for flight. In a short time, all was ready, and, filled with melancholy presages, the husband and wife bade a silent adieu, each resolved to encounter with firmness their respective duties and difficulties. Not a living thing which could lay claim to the name of property was left on the premises, if we except an old negro and his wife who volunteered to remain with their mistress. But the provisions which had been stored away for the American troops, and for the accommodation of such travelers as might venture abroad in these times of gloom and terror, were left exposed; and the spacious cellar was filled with barrels of peach brandy, distilled at home, and carefully reserved for the same purposes. To save a portion of these was now the most anxious object with Mrs. Moore—to save all was entirely out of the question. In view of her slender resources, she instantly resolved to leave the cribs and granaries to fare as they might, and directed her whole thoughts and means to the preservation of her stores in the cellar. She at once calculated that the whole troop would be breakfasted at her expense, and this she resolved to offer with cheerfulness. Unprovided with means of transportation, it could hardly be supposed that cavalry would or could carry away more than would answer temporarily, being so far too from the main body of the army. To prevent destruction of what was left was, therefore, the important question. She was sure that the liquor could not escape, and in daily expectation that Colonel Washington would be passing (who was attempting to check the

rapacity of the enemy), she was most anxious to preserve full rations for his weary and patriotic band.

Leaving her children to the care of the faithful negress, she descended, candle in hand, accompanied by her servant, to the cellar beneath. Within this was an apartment back, divided by a thick wall, and to which no light was admitted. Here was always stored the brandy, which, thus secured, was left to mellow and to purify. Her excellent sense at once suggested that this secluded stronghold, together with the pleasant and captivating *effluvia* which exuded from its every crack or crevice, would be most sure to attract, and probably *distract* the attention of the robbers who were shortly expected. Applying the key to the iron-faced door, which looked as though it might resist the strongest efforts if stormed, she directed the astonished servant to roll out a number of the choice barrels. These she strewed in different parts of the open room, taking care to conceal them partially by carelessly throwing over them pieces of hoops and staves, or mildewed straw, in such manner as to create the impression that they were nothing more than heaps of useless rubbish. After the same fashion she also adroitly disguised several barrels of pork and flour, to guard against contingencies. This, though simple in every particular, was a remarkable instance of self-possession in a matron not much exceeding the age of twenty-five, and so perilously situated. Having done all she could do, and again locking the door, she put the key in her basket and re-entered her chamber. Her children were quietly sleeping on their pallet, and anxious, but resolved, she lay down undressed by their side, not to sleep, but to await the event as became a wife, a mother, and a woman of America.

CHAPTER II.

True to his accustomed activity, by early dawn on the day following, Tarleton had broken up his bivouac, and before the sun mounted over the surrounding hills, was on his march for the Ordinary. A dense fog covered the whole space around, and his approach was known only from the rumbling echo of hoofs as the squadron galloped over the frozen ground. Foremost came a corporal with his advanced guard, to make known the orders of his imperious and fierce commander. Early as was the hour, Mrs. Moore had prepared her plan of action, and, as the officer entered, unasked and unannounced, was sitting before a huge log fire which blazed in the parlor corner, calmly engaged with her knitting, as though peril and insult were not near. On his entrance, she rose, but offered no salute or invitation, and the rough soldier swaggered to the fire, where, standing with his back to its cheerful blaze, a skirt of his coat hanging from each arm, he thus accosted the matron in the rude and discourteous style so common at that time with the British troops.

"Well, madam, where is the infernal old rebel who keeps this house? Answer me quick, for by ——, I'm in no humor for dainty mouthing and silly scenes."

"What mean you, sir?" answered Mrs. Moore, who by the by was blessed with a full share of temper when

excited, as well as spirit to maintain it. "I am not in the habit of hearing or replying to such beastly language."

"You ask what I mean," said the corporal. "I will tell you that I mean your husband, or whatever you are to the rebellious traitor whose name hangs on yonder sign. If we can lay hands on him, I'll try and raise his head by the side of his name, and ask of you no further aid than the loan of a strong bed-cord." And, pointing to the beam on the sign-post, he made a significant motion with his hand about his neck, which left no doubt as to the allusion.

This insult, so stinging and so unprovoked, drew an involuntary tear to the eye of the helpless woman, but, wisely subduing any appearance of the kind in such company, she turned her back on the ruffian, and walked into her chamber.

At this moment, the full, mellow sound of a bugle awaked the echoes of hill and dale, and the whole troop appeared in sight at the head of the lane. The rising sun had dispelled in part the thick mist of the morning, and from a window of her room the lady could catch glimpses of their shining armor as they rapidly advanced. Presently they galloped full into the yard, and the corporal walked out to meet them.

A towering, stalwart officer, clad in the splendid uniform of a British dragoon, dismounted from his charger, and, after exchanging a word with the corporal, advanced towards the doorway, making the oaken floor of the long gallery in front ring with the clang of his iron-heeled cavalry boots. The huge roan steed, the long brown hair, and the frightful marks of small-pox which

disfigured his otherwise comely face, told at once who this officer was, and, agreeably to the plan she had formed, Mrs. Moore, having a little girl by the hand, and an infant boy in her arms, met him promptly at the hall door.

"Colonel Tarleton, I presume," she said, with a graceful curtsey.

"At your service, madam," was the prompt reply of that celebrated officer. And, as he touched the rim of his dragoon cap, he responded to the offer of the lady by seating himself with somewhat of the same familiarity which had distinguished his sub-officer before the parlor fire.

Fierce and unrelenting, though always roughly courteous, the British commander was nevertheless struck with the calm dignity, the stately manner, and somewhat aristocratic demeanor of his landlady, and could not reconcile her appearance with the generally received notions of an innkeeper's wife.

"'Pon honor, madam," said he, "I must say you have there two likely, nice little folks," and, offering his hand to the little girl, who readily took it, he at the same time slightly caressed the boy in the mother's arms. With staring eye and trembling lip, the infant pertly struck the hand which he extended, and hid its head in the folds of the mother's shawl.

"Oh, ho," laughed Tarleton, "some of the old leaven, I see. The *red* is too strong for his little *blue* eyes, I suppose; hey, madam?" winking knowingly at the mother. "By the way, madam, does the father of this fiery little rebel always leave you to do the honors of his tavern? His faith is tolerably strong, considering your

age and comeliness. Come, my good madam, tell me, have you locked him in the closet, hid him in the cuddy, or stuffed him under the bed? He has served his mob Congress and his rebel leaders well enough to receive some attention at my hands."

"I am happy to say, sir," returned the lady, "that my husband is beyond your reach, and I decline for him the attentions you speak of. As to whether I have placed him where you suggest, I presume you will soon find when you commence your usual round of forcing locks, tearing open beds, and burning houses."

"For George, madam, a proper answer from a rebel's wife to an officer in his majesty's service!" said Tarleton, with a mixture of humor and mock severity of tone. "And what if I should do all you have said, how can these daring and obstinate rebels complain who put his majesty to such trouble? Make yourself easy, my good hostess, but I have now no time to parley or play at cross questions with a spirited dame. Work is before me, and work is always first with those under my orders."

At this instant the corporal again entered, and, lifting his cap, approached to where his officer and the lady were sitting. At the sight of her insulter, Mrs. Moore could not repress a slight exclamation. She started back, whilst the fire of injured feeling and outraged delicacy burned in her lustrous eyes, and suffused with a deep crimson hue the cheeks just now pallid almost from the reflection in whose dread presence she stood. All these were not unobserved by the quick glance of Tarleton, who, beyond doubt, had felt his chivalry awakened by the manner and spirit of the woman before him.

"Pray, what is the matter, madam?" he asked.

"And what causes you such feeling at the sight of my officer?"

Unabashed and nerved by the full flow of resentment which lurks in woman's bosom when smarting beneath the rankling of insult and outrage, Mrs. Moore recounted with feeling emphasis the gross language and the offensive allusion which had aroused and embittered her feelings as a wife and a mother. As she proceeded, the rigid frown which contracted the brow of Tarleton, and the fury which sparkled from his fierce glance, told that woman had found a protector, and sent a cold shudder to the heart of the brutal offender.

When asked if he admitted the fact, the trooper could not articulate, so firmly had fear and conscious guilt clenched his teeth; and when, in the rage of passion, and with the full sway of a British commanding officer, Tarleton strode forward and struck him, the soldier cowered and shrank beneath the blow like a slave. This was not all. Tarleton caused him to unclasp his sword-belt, and then, breaking the weapon before his face, ordered him to the rear under arrest.

These facts, being substantially true, serve to relieve in some measure the odium which is generally heaped on the name and memory of this distinguished, though cruel Briton. On this occasion he certainly behaved as a gallant and high-souled officer, jealous of the reputation of his service, though his harsh and summary chastisement of the offender in the presence of a lady, a scene so unsuited to female softness and delicacy, showed in a strong view that impulsive and fierce disposition so characteristic of the man.

This being done, Tarleton resumed his natural humor,

and proceeded with his inquiries, as though nothing of an unusual character had happened. And indeed such scenes in the British army, which in the French or American service would have aroused a hurricane of resentment among the junior officers and privates, were by no means uncommon, and account in part for the ruffian dispositions of the soldiery when unchecked by rigid discipline.

"Now, madam," said Tarleton, "since it seems I shall not now have the pleasure of conducting your husband as a prisoner of war to my commanding officer, I must trouble you to breakfast my squad with a portion of those dainty supplies which doubtless your good man has left to be distributed to the rebel army, who know so much better how to run than how to fight."

"Do they indeed?" said the matron, emboldened to satire, perhaps, by the consciousness of being in a gentleman's power, and not in that of a ruffian, as he had been represented. "Doubtless we poor Americans have been duped by false rumors: but a few weeks since we had news that his majesty's troops fully equaled them in the first, whilst our poor soldiers proved their knowledge of the last quite to the satisfaction of Cornwallis and his officers."

"Ah, you allude to that ridiculous, helter-skelter affair at your Cowpens," answered Tarleton, no way confused. "Well, madam, I did my part, as you doubtless heard, and his lordship hopes soon to get this mob enclosed in *pens* something more substantial than where we last had them."

"Report says," retorted the lady, now cruel in turn, "that we have an officer in the American ranks who does

not much dread close quarters in battle, even though he finds himself face to face with a very redoubted adversary."

"Zounds, madam, you tempt me to anger by such a ridiculous tirade," answered he, somewhat moved, though not out of humor. "If ever I can get sight of this namesake of your old rebel chief, I will leave on him a mark by which he can boast to some effect of an encounter."

"In that case," again said the lady, archly smiling, "you and he, from what we hear, will be then fairly at quits, for it is said he has already balanced that score."

The latter part of this conversation is given on testimony not considered altogether reliable in our courts of judicature, though if the report, which has since received the sanction of history, be true, that Tarleton had lost his fingers in a hand to hand fight with Colonel Washington, it is fairly presumable that the rumor was then rife. On this occasion, he was gloved and booted, as already remarked, and the wound, if ever inflicted, was not of course visible.

CHAPTER III.

THE troop dismounted and arranged to cook and eat their breakfast in the open yard, Tarleton and a few of his higher officers only partaking their meal in the hall under the invitation and superintendence of their inexplicable hostess. Whilst engaged in discussing, with great apparent pleasure, the substantial repast spread out before them, it is said that Tarleton, with a species of blunt politeness peculiar to him, asked "if he could get a cup of tea."

"A cup of tea!" answered Mrs. Moore. "Colonel Tarleton surely forgets that he is breakfasting with the wife of an American patriot. In these times, too, we have no means of transporting hither the waters in Boston harbor, and they are the only specimen of the article you wish we have had in this country for many years past."

At this tart but good-humored sally, the young officers at table laughed outright, despite the presence of their commander, whose crude and severe notions of loyalty and discipline were understood to be generally averse to the least levity as regarded the course of his superiors, or the action of his government. After gravely rebuking them on this occasion, he replied to the lady of the house in his usual tone, half earnest, half humorous.

"Well, my dear madam," said he, "I only wish

those savages had maintained their disguise long enough to allow his majesty's troops an opportunity of tinging the tea of Boston harbor with the color so obnoxious to you Americans. Their blood would have answered the purpose admirably. The Ethiopian may not change his skin, but savages sometimes have been known to do the like, especially when their color was likely to cost them dear."

Breakfast was finished, and the bugle sounded the assembly. The officers were at their respective posts, but Tarleton still remained by the fireside. The troopers were all paraded in line in front of the house, when, at an order from the sergeant, every tenth man dismounted, leaving his horse in charge of his right file. These formed the search corps, a system of domiciliary which was never neglected by Tarleton in these official military visits.

Through the open door the lady of the house had seen this movement, and understood at once its object. Under the direction of the sergeant, this corps filed off toward the lots where the corn, fodder, and various provender were collected and stored. On their return, they seized upon the old negro man, and ordered him to conduct them to the store-room of the Ordinary and to the cellar. The first of these, like the various houses just left, were noted down in the sergeant's memorandum book. Arrived at the cellar, the sergeant himself led the way. He approached the apparent heaps of rubbish, and with his foot kicked off some of the top coverings; but, as the old servant began to dread the failure of his mistress's plan, the keen eye of the soldier was attracted to the iron-faced door of the locked cellar, and, followed

by his companions, he sprang forward with undisguised ecstasy. But to force it was no easy matter, and the keys were in possession of the landlady. The savory smell of the brandy excited the keenest appetite, and a most unconquerable thirst. They resolved on a report to the chief, whose influence, it was hoped, might obtain the keys, and thus prevent the delay, which none relished, and the necessity, which was, from appearances, by no means inviting, of resorting to force. The report was made, and Tarleton peremptorily demanded the keys. The lady replied that she would never surrender them willingly, and gave the chieftain to understand that, if he obtained the keys, which she displayed from her girdle, he must get them as he could.

Tarleton disdained to use compulsory or ungallant means with a lady of such undoubted pretensions, and ordered the sergeant to take men and what materials he could gather, and break open the door which locked in the precious viands, most precious of all things to the soldier.

He himself superintended the work, and from motives of seeking her safety in his presence, as well as a natural anxiety, Mrs. Moore, attended by her children, went along with him. This work consumed an hour or two, which rendered the British officer restive and impatient, especially when he reflected that the delay might be saved by a slight severity, which he had not often scrupled to practice. His men were astonished at this relaxation, and an officer was heard to swear "that he believed the colonel was smitten with the comely appearance and lofty spirit of the rebel dame."

At length, after vigorous efforts, the door gave way,

and the barrels lay before them. Tarleton gave orders to have his men served each with a heavy ration, and their canteens filled. This done, he unhesitatingly caused his men to break open the heads of such as remained over, and the floor of the cellar was flooded in an instant. Mrs. Moore looked on silently, but with ill-repressed indignation, which Tarleton failed not to notice.

"The rules of war are severe, my good madam," said he, "but you rebels leave us no choice. This liquor has been saved with great labor, and doubtless for other purposes; but my orders are to anticipate and provide against such purposes."

"I expected no better," replied the lady, "and perhaps I had best prepare for worse."

"That you will soon find out, madam," was the pithy reply, and the stern veteran bowed, and re-conducted his fair companion to the upper story. The sergeant now presented his memorandum, and after some conversation between the two, Tarleton, turning to the lady, observed, "My officer returns me herewith a schedule of your stock of provisions, which I am ordered either to seize or cut off from the rebel army. I have levied enough already to answer present purposes, but you must give me your word of honor not to apply these to the wants of the Americans, else I shall proceed with my duty."

"Then proceed," said the lady, firmly, "for I assure you that I shall make no such promise."

"Madam, this promise can cost you nothing," said the officer, evidently reluctant to resort to severity. "If I destroy them, the rebels cannot get them, and they lose nothing."

"I am not insensible to what you say," returned the lady, "and I acknowledge my obligation to you for one instance of courtesy. If you cannot spare us further losses and destruction, I regret it; but I cannot purchase your forbearance by the sacrifice of my duty to my husband and countrymen."

This heroic speech closed the parley, and threw, at once, all to the discretion and decision of the British chieftain. He cast around his officers an inquiring and somewhat perplexed glance. Their expression could not be mistaken, and he resolved to err for once on the side of forbearance.

"Sergeant, form the line, and prepare for marching," he sharply exclaimed. "And now hearken, madam; I shall leave your property untouched, after having exacted our meal, and let loose the brandy barrels, and you may boast hereafter of having done what no man has succeeded in doing, and that is, having turned Lieutenant-Colonel Tarleton, of his majesty's dragoons, from the proper course of his purpose."

Having thus said, he strode forth from the room and called for his charger. Gratified at her success in preserving the brandy disguised in the front cellar, and touched with the unexpected courtesy from an officer so usually unrelenting, one other idea still occurred to the sagacious reflections of this calculating woman. This was that stragglers might return, and, in the absence of officers, destroy what was left, and subject her to renewed outrage. She took her resolution in a moment, and just when Tarleton was in the act of stepping forth to mount his horse, she gently tapped his elbow, and requested that an officer might be permitted to remain

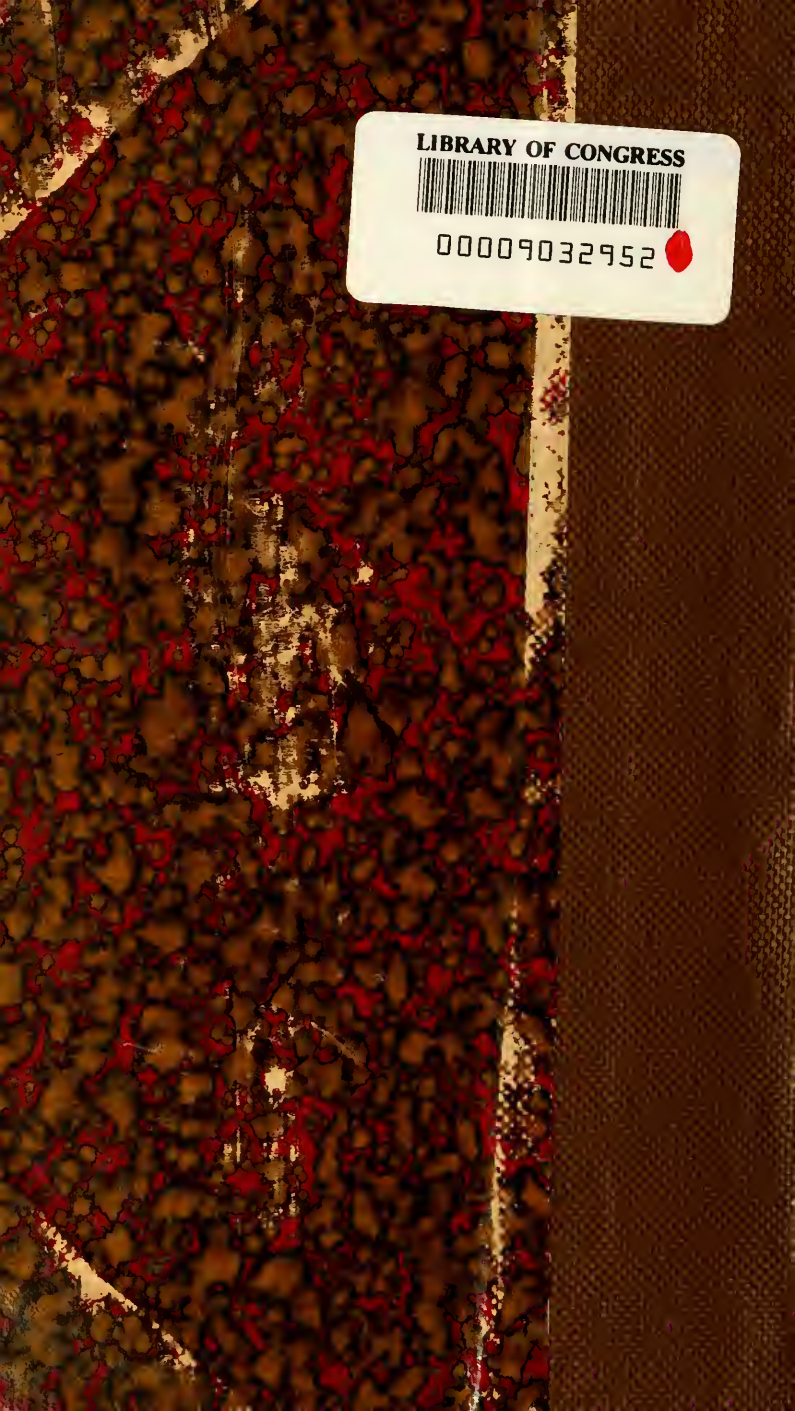
until the troop had gone far enough to prevent the occurrence she apprehended.

"Madam," said he, "I do not feel authorized to detail any officer on a duty which might prove one of great danger, and not known to the service. I shall take pains to guard against what you apprehend; but if any one chooses to volunteer in your favor, I shall not prohibit him from so doing." A young lieutenant immediately rode out and tendered his services.

"Very well," said Tarleton again. And gracefully waving his sword in adieu, he turned and galloped to his usual post at the head of the troop. The bugle sounded, the word "march" was passed along the line, and, wheeling into sections with most elegant precision, the imposing array moved off. In a very few moments more, the last of the "invincible legion" disappeared in the distance, and the solitary dragoon officer sat down in the parlor of the Ordinary to meditate on the probable dangers of his situation.

But these dangers were only imaginary, for his grateful hostess heard, in a few weeks after he left her, that he had reached Tarleton in safety, and participated in the obstinate and bloody fight at Guilford Court House, which resulted so gloriously to the American army, and so effectually broke up the boasted and well-planned campaign of the British general.

THE END.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